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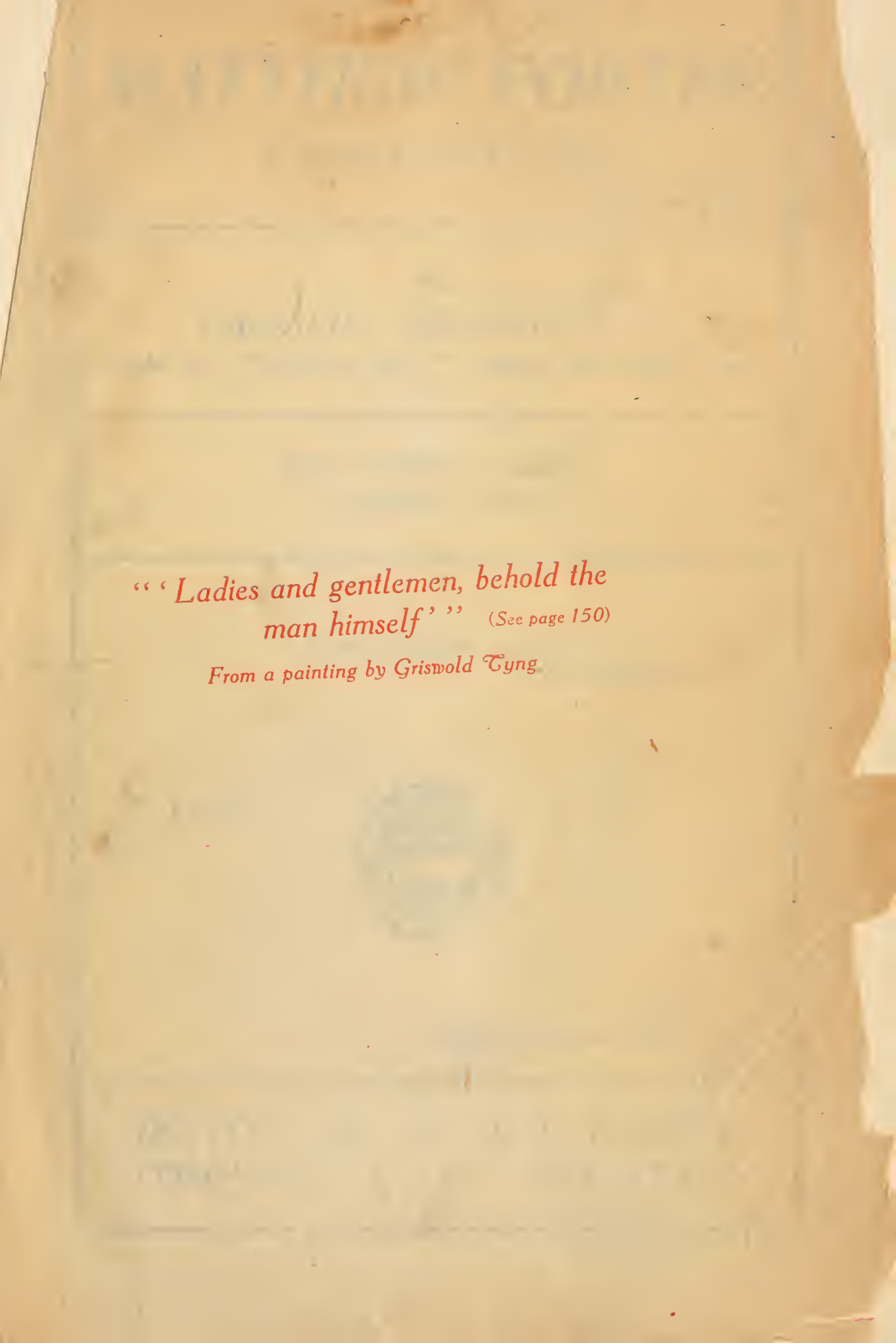
1908

MATTHEW PORTER



"'Ladies and gentlemen, behold the man himself'" (See page 150)

From a painting by Griswold Tyng

MATTHEW PORTER

A STORY OF TO-DAY

47-45

By

GAMALIEL BRADFORD, Jr.

Author of "The Private Tutor," "Between Two Masters," etc.

With a frontispiece in colour by
GRISWOLD TYNG

No wit, no help like a woman's"
—Thomas Middleton.

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To

My Father

MATTHEW PORTER

CHAPTER I

William J. Wood and his nephew, Dudley Heath, were dining together at the Beacon Club in Boston. Wood proposed to be the Republican boss of Massachusetts and United States senator; and many thought his ambitions were likely to be realized. He was a man of something under fifty, with a clean-shaven face, light hair and gray eyes, and a solid jaw.

It was about a month after the Presidential election; and as Wood had just come back from the capital, his talk naturally turned on the prospects there.

"It's like sitting on a volcano," he said. "Nobody can tell what may happen. People that like sensations ought to live in Washington. They'll get them."

Then he spoke of Massachusetts affairs, of Governor Worcester, just elected for a second term, who would certainly not stand again and was Wood's rival for the Senate; of the lieutenant-governor, Graham, who had died since the election.

"Yes, Dudley," said the elder man at length, "I'll put you in for Governor next fall."

Heath made no direct answer. "Why not go up-stairs and have a smoke, if you've finished?" he suggested.

They went. When they were comfortably settled in opposite corners of a huge sofa, Heath resumed the conversation. "So you think I should make a good governor?"

His uncle looked thoughtfully at the face of the speaker, before replying. It was a handsome face, but not a pleasant one. The forehead, the dark smooth hair, the hazel eyes were well enough; but the nose was coarsely prominent and the mouth was peculiarly cynical and sensual, even in smiling. "No," answered the Honourable William J. "You're the best governor in sight, from my point of view; but you won't make a good governor, from anybody's point of view, till you cut out that sneer and the make-believe of not believing in things. You're cynical, and that never does anybody any good — least of all the owner."

Heath leaned back in his corner and smiled, with more cynicism than ever. "You're not a cynic," he murmured. "You do believe in things. You ought to be in the church instead of politics."

"I believe in myself," was the cool answer.

"I hope you don't expect me to."

Wood disregarded the interruption, and continued. "I believe in other things, but that's

none of your business. At any rate, if there are a few things I don't believe in, I don't go around saying so."

"Do I?" inquired the injured nephew. "My business is to make people feel that I believe what they believe. I've made rather a success of it, I fancy."

"You've got a sort of useful popularity. There's no denying it. The public doesn't know you as well as I do. Anybody would suppose your face would tell the secret."

Heath murmured his thanks with entire imperturbability. "It's a face that has fitted a Massachusetts representative and senator pretty well for several years. It will fit a governor, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes. Any face will do that."

Both men smoked and were silent for a little, watching the comers and goers in the room about them. Now and then they exchanged a nod or brief greeting with a passer-by.

At length Heath recurred to the subject. "Speaking of cynicism, there's Mat Porter. Some say he's going to be governor."

Wood's hard jaw set harder. "That Porter — he's no cynic. He believes in himself and a lot of other things beside. You could learn something from him."

"Think so?"

"Well, no, I don't think so. But it would do you good to try. He's a man we've got to look out for. He has ideas, and they're as danger-

ous as dynamite. I never shall forget the way he worked that factory sanitation bill through the legislature last spring. The money and the influence were all on the other side. But he had his men hypnotized. We couldn't do anything with them. If he gets up for governor, we shall have to fight. He'll show whether your smile will come off or not. But the Democratic committee fellows will fight him as hard as we shall. You know him, don't you? Up-country chap? Came from Foxbridge, didn't he?"

The speaker had leaned forward and asked his questions eagerly, but Heath did not find the eagerness contagious and drawled his answer from the same quiet posture in the corner. "Yes, I know Porter — more than I want to. We were classmates. But the Foxbridge people wouldn't like to be called up-country. The world revolves about them. No, Porter's no cynic, just the sort of man you wish I were. If I were, how you'd sneer at me! His father was a minister and I fancy it's in the blood. The father's dead now and Mat lives with an older sister. He's about my age, I suppose, thirty-five or so. He's got a little money, studied law and is good at it, but prefers politics. He was a hypnotizer, as you say, in college, baseball, debating, all that sort of thing. A thorough athlete — not heavy, but sound, all bone and muscle, never done up. Not the Porcellian, — Oh, no. But a fellow everybody liked. Now he's in politics for ideas, — as

you say; and a dangerous man, — as you say; and the Democratic committee fellows hate him, — as you say. But it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he was too many for them — and for us."

"And all we've got to fight him with is you," commented Wood, in a tone of discouragement.

"Yes, I'm the only one in sight, — as you say. But then there are some things to be said for me." Here the cynic sat up and put a shade more animation into his manner. "I'm a gentleman — the real, dissipated, idle, swell article, such as the horny-handed people like. I'm shrewd and know a trick or two, as you can't deny. I can adapt myself to anything or anybody. That's one of the advantages of not believing in anything, and it helps out, even when one can't hypnotize. And then I like a fight. I've played football, and I've played polo, and I've been to Cuba, and now I should like nothing better than a fair match with Mat Porter — to a finish. It will wake me up. See?"

William J. Wood saw, and his spirits seemed partially revived. "Know anything about Porter's ideas?" he asked. "What's he going to spring on us, anyway?"

The prospective governor did not answer until he had ordered a Scotch and soda, a libation in which his uncle declined to share. "Mat's ideas? That sort of thing isn't in my line, you know. I never meddle with ideas of any kind. I believe he wants to give the governor more power, says the legislature is an irre-

sponsible mob and would like to call it down, rakes over the committee method of transacting business, and talks about the Executive — with a big E — doing something. Fancy it! With a score of governors on record who have done nothing in such a beautiful way and with so much credit!"

"Why, he's a crank," exclaimed William J., in utter disgust.

"Oh, no, he believes in things, that's all."

"Bosh! A man can't work politics with such notions as that."

"But you see he's a hypnotizer, as you justly pointed out. A crank who can hypnotize is the kind of man that does the biggest things and makes the other fellows look lively."

Wood uttered no response to this, but sat back in his corner, buried in smoke and thought. Perhaps he wished now that he had tried a little of the comforting beverage which his nephew was sipping leisurely.

"We've got to get down to business," he murmured at last. "And it can't be too soon. Is this Porter boom really started?"

Heath shook his head and sipped. "Don't know," he said.

"We don't want to start it for him. But we'll watch out, and when the time comes, an editorial or two will help — danger of revolutionary ideas, record of the old party for stability, people should be cautious about trusting new men and their experiments. We must get

the papers into line early — especially the independent ones."

"Sounds feeblish to me," suggested the sympathetic nephew.

Wood paid no attention to this, but fell again to his reflections. "Of course there's the possibility of fixing him," he began once more.

"Who? Porter?" snapped Heath. "Oh, no, there isn't. How often must I tell you that he believes in things?"

"Is there anything he believes in more than in a ten-thousand-dollar salary?"

"Cynic! And you accuse me of not believing in human nature!"

Yet again the Republican leader dropped back into the vast abyss of contemplation. When he emerged, it was with another idea, though his manner did not indicate great confidence. "You said he wasn't married?"

"No. Lives with his sister."

"Sometimes the best way to get at that sort of man is through a woman."

"Sometimes," agreed Heath, non-committally.

"A woman like Nellie Fleet, you know," Wood continued, in a tentative tone. "She played the very devil with the legislators."

"Wouldn't do at all. She couldn't touch him — not his kind."

"No?" was the disappointed answer. "That's a pity. He must be very particular."

"He is."

"By the way," said the uncle, taking up the thread again, after a moment, "haven't I heard that he and you were sweet on the same girl?"

"You may have."

"Well?"

"We are still — sweet on her, in your pleasant phraseology."

"Now that's curious. Isn't there something to be done with him that way? That Ferguson girl, isn't it? Can't she persuade him out of his nonsense? There's nothing in the world like a woman to do it."

"Just so." Heath seemed to take more interest now. He sat up and finished his whiskey and threw away his cigar. "But you see, I want the Ferguson girl myself."

"Surely you don't believe in love, at your age," sneered Wood.

"Not a bit of it. But I believe in money. Her father's got a pot of money, with all his electric roads and stuff, and she's the only child. And then I want to beat that fellow Porter. I went into this fight before the governorship question was dreamed of and I'm bound to win out."

"All right. I wouldn't disturb your love-affairs. It's a pity to destroy the few illusions you've got. But your cousin, Miss Buckingham, has money. At one time I thought you were after her. She must be a finer woman, I should say."

Heath had closed his eyes and appeared to be

dwelling on a mental comparison. "Oh, yes," he agreed slowly. "She's a finer woman. No doubt about that. Too fine for me. Too fine for any one. She walks with her head in the air. A man can't touch her."

"I see," said the uncle with a nod. "It's natural enough. A woman of thirty — she must be that, I suppose? — who's had her own way and millions for ten years, isn't likely to make a model wife."

"I'd risk that. Margaret Ferguson won't make a model wife — nor I a model husband. But Viola won't make a wife at all — for me, at any rate."

"She's a wise woman. How does she live? What does she do? Play bridge or slum?"

"Neither. She has a *salon.* Fancy it! In Boston! She has a crowd of what she considers Bohemians — guaranteed strictly virtuous — women who sing and paint and play and that sort of thing — high art, you know. That idiot, George Buckingham, is her factotum. She doesn't sing, nor play, nor paint herself — considers herself above it, I imagine. But she's a patroness of the Muses. Such Muses! She scorns bridge and slums both. Won't that do for her?"

Wood made no answer, but once more became absorbed in thought. Heath lit another cigar and looked at the ceiling. There were various other groups in the room, laughing and chatting; but no one seemed disposed to disturb

the uncle and nephew in their quiet corner, though now and then a curious glance was cast in that direction.

"How would she do for Porter?" suggested Wood at length.

"Viola? Oh, Lord!" And Heath laughed his silent, unpleasant laugh.

"Why not? He's a minister's son, you say, brought up in the country, probably knows nothing about that kind of life. Let her draw him in, sing to him, play for him, paint for him — or get others to. Give him things to eat and drink. Get a lot of pretty girls fluttering around him — strictly virtuous, as you say. He'd lose his grip on his ideas — just a little, just a little more, all the time."

Heath continued to gaze at the ceiling, but his laughter had faded and given place to meditation.

"Then," Wood continued, "it won't be all what she does to him, but what we can do to him. Some of our noble, independent papers will be so grieved to hear that the once promising hero of Democracy is coming into contact with associations which — aren't good for him. And the Republican sheets will be delighted that he is getting civilized and that the Democrats have at last chosen a man who is honoured by the society of our best citizens. I see a lot in this. Doesn't your cousin love you enough to do you such a small favour?"

"She doesn't love me at all." The speaker

was leaning forward now, with his head between his hands, thinking over the proposition.

"Oh, yes, she does."

"No, she doesn't. But she hates Democrats and radicals and the people generally. She's an aristocrat to her toes. She might take to the idea of converting him, you know, educating him, reforming him. She has a lot of that sort of stuff in her, if it's put to her right."

"And you're just the man to put it to her right," exclaimed the gratified intriguer.

"Thanks. No doubt you could do it better; but I suppose it would come from me more naturally." Then, after a moment of silence, which his uncle did not venture to interrupt, Heath added: "Has it occurred to you that she might take it into her head to marry him?"

"Thunder! No!" The ejaculation was loud enough to attract the attention of several members of the nearest group; but the speaker lowered his tone, as he asked, "Would she?"

"I should say not, if a woman didn't always marry the man you knew she wouldn't."

It was the uncle's turn to reflect again, with a shadowed forehead; but it cleared at length. "And if she did, how could we ruin him more surely? What is ruin for a poor, ambitious radical with ideas, but to marry a haughty, luxurious aristocrat, who will make him throw over his followers, and run after her whims, and dance to every tune she chooses to play? Let her marry him."

But Heath was doubtful still. "Think what he could do with her money!"

"Nonsense! You're jealous already. Think what the money would do with him! We must take some chances. Wouldn't the Democracy of Massachusetts mistrust a man who was wallowing in the inherited accumulation of the capitalists? I'll undertake to make them mistrust him, if the unexpected should occur. Go at the thing, will you? You can't begin too soon."

So the astute politician continued to combat his nephew's objections with increasing energy, until Heath at last agreed to see Viola and sound her. That could do no harm at any rate.

"Naturally," said Wood, "there's no use in showing her the whole hand. Flatter her. Persuade her that she can save the party and the state by getting the kinks out of this fellow and making him run in harness. He might be a good Republican, if he could get rid of his nonsense."

"And his honesty," Heath suggested.

"But you needn't point out to her," Wood went on, "that it will be just as useful to us to have him associate with her, whether she converts him or not."

"I admit I'm a cynic," interrupted the young man; "but I'm not a fool. Leave me to manage this my own way."

Thereupon the two rose and mingled with their fellow clubmen.

CHAPTER II

NATHAN A. FERGUSON was a man of business and nothing else. He was born of poor and not exceptionally honest parents in the little village of Foxbridge. The poverty he had managed to shake off. The lack of honesty was an ingrained inheritance and stuck by him. He had no especial education, but his mind needed none for the use he made of it. At thirty-five he was a thriving cotton broker. At fifty-five he was a millionaire, interested in the Shoe String Trust, and half a dozen other trusts, and particularly interested in electric transportation. He was a short, smooth, slippery man, with black hair and moustache, turning gray, and bright, brown, shifty eyes. His wife was dead, and had been dead so long he had forgotten her.

A few days after the hatching of the Wood-Heath conspiracy, Ferguson and his daughter, Margaret, were receiving a call from Porter in the heavily magnificent parlour of their heavily magnificent Commonwealth Avenue mansion. The two men talked, while Margaret leaned back on a sofa and every now and then suppressed a yawn.

"So you mean to go on devoting your life to politics?" asked the gray-haired stock manipulator.

"I do," was the eager answer. "Every ounce of energy I have is going into them, so long as I live and see as clearly as I do now what I want to accomplish."

"Then you're in it to do good?"

"I like the fun and I'm ambitious. Do you think a man is worth much who isn't? But I believe our system of government needs to be made over, in the state, and in the nation, too; but the state is what I'm interested in. People think democracy is a failure. It's government by legislature that is the failure. You can't run a business by a legislature. You can't command an army by a legislature. Macaulay says: 'Armies have conquered under good generals. Armies have conquered under bad generals. No army ever conquered under a debating society.' The remedy, one remedy, at any rate, for the evils of our government, is to give the governor more power, and more responsibility. Two terms in the legislature have convinced me of that. The governor should be represented in the legislature and stand for the state there. Now, one man stands for Provincetown, another for North Adams; one for Northfield, and one for Springfield. Who stands, or sits, or cares for Massachusetts?"

"And you mean to be governor, with more

power, and care for Massachusetts?" was the mildly sarcastic suggestion.

"I mean to try."

"These are Marston's ideas, aren't they? Didn't his father write a book about them?" Ferguson continued.

"Certainly. I don't deny it. Two people in Foxbridge have been the making of me: you, Mr. Ferguson, with your advice and sympathy in practical matters," — as he said this, he looked at Margaret, though he addressed her father, — "and Mr. Marston with his political ideas. He's a man who thinks and sets others thinking, though he cannot act himself. It was he who made a Democrat of me. Not that he feels or I feel that as a party the Democrats are any better than the Republicans. It is six of one and half a dozen of the other, so far as present aims and methods go. But you can't accomplish anything except through the party system, and we think that the old Democratic ideas, which were unnecessary in Jefferson's day, are just the right ideas now."

Margaret sat quiet in her corner and coolly gauged the speaker's eagerness. She noted the firm poise of the head, the compression of the thinnish lips, the enthusiasm of the open gray eyes. But there was no sympathy in her tone, when she uttered a sharp comment at this point. "I don't think I should want to get my ideas from Mr. Marston, or from anybody, second-hand."

"Don't we all get our ideas second or third or thirtieth hand from some one?" urged Porter, more as a plea than as a protest. "The thing to do is to make them thoroughly our own."

But Margaret's father was less interested in the personal than in the general aspect of the discussion. "So you want to return to State Rights," he said. "I should call that a back number of the worst description."

"I don't think so. The strength of our government ought to be in the just balance of state and nation. What has ruined all republics in the past? Centralization. Here we have a set of wheels within wheels, which is a sure protection against centralization, if we use it rightly. But we let the state go and think only about Washington. After all, what has the ordinary citizen to do with Washington? He is educated by the state, he is married by state laws, does business by state laws, pays taxes to the state, and has the state's license to be buried. Yet when we carry on a campaign for state governor, the chief things we discuss are the tariff and the currency, which are national affairs and do not belong to the state at all."

"That simply shows that centralization is what we're bound to have," urged Ferguson, with his smoothly unctuous, good-natured persistence. "Those old ideas were good enough for farmers' days, when each state was a little country by itself and it took a week to get from

Boston to New York. We're all one country now. The man who lives in Boston marries a wife in New Orleans and does business in San Francisco. If he wants to get a divorce or form a new corporation, it's absurd that he shouldn't have the same Federal law for all three places."

"If that's the case," answered Porter earnestly, but very courteously, "the sooner we get rid of the state organizations the better. Don't you see, as it is now, all these immensely important functions are left to the states and are managed by the states? Yet public attention is wholly fixed on Washington. No glory, no credit is to be got by a life devoted to state politics. The legislators are either men whose one thought is to get to Washington or who only care to use their term of office to fill their pockets. And all our most important affairs are managed in the dark by a corrupt and mischievous lobby, while the newspapers are full of the far-away doings of the President and Congress. If we are to be governed from Washington, let us be governed from Washington, and get rid of the old arrangements altogether. But we all know that that can never be. And if we are to have state governments, and to trust them with the dearest interests of our lives, let us make them real, serious things. Let us drag great measures out from dark committee-rooms and spidery lobbies and put them into the hands of a strong executive. Let him

be responsible at every step, under free and full discussion, to the watchful criticism of the legislature. Then each man in that legislature will be eager to distinguish himself in debate and to thrust himself and his friends, by honest service, into executive office. But you'll think I'm making a campaign speech."

Ferguson smiled his smooth smile, behind which, as Porter well knew, there was little comprehension and no conviction. "And a very good one. Only campaign speeches don't amount to much, at the best. These things sound well, but we all know they aren't practical. Even supposing you get elected on reform ideas, can you do anything? Look at those other reform governors, Folk in Missouri, La Follette in Wisconsin, Garvin in Rhode Island. What a fuss was made about them and what did they do?"

"But," urged Porter, "they had no general principle. They simply wanted to reform things, without any special idea as to how to set about it."

Still the unctuous smile. "Politics want a business head, not ideas, nor principles, nor theories." Then the smile continued, with an attempt at real warmth of sympathy. "Mat, I've known you from a boy and I'm sure you believe I take an interest in you. Give the thing up. No Democrat can make good in Massachusetts for any length of time. You've had a fine training at law. Stick to that. I'll

find work for you. Then, when you're a little older and better off, slip quietly into politics again on the right side and you'll do something. You think it over and talk with me later."

With this sage advice the capitalist withdrew his sleek urbanity and left his daughter to do the honours.

It was evident that Porter, for the moment, thought no more of politics. "I have tried twice before to find you," he began. "As soon as I heard you had got back, I came."

"Why were you in such a hurry?" was the unsympathetic response. "You haven't inherited a fortune?"

"You know why," was the quiet answer.

She took no notice of this, simply leaned back in her corner, opened and shut her fan once or twice, and yawned slightly.

"Was Mexico worth seeing?" Porter went on.

"Hardly enough so to make conversation. There were the usual bad hotels and vulgar Americans and shops full of nothing."

"And the Aztecs and Montezuma?"

"My friend," answered the young lady, with a trifle more energy, "I don't want to talk about Mexico. If it is for that that you have called to see me three times — is it? — do not call a fourth."

"Mexico is no more interesting to me than it is to you."

"Then why recur to it?" Here she sat up

and spoke more gently and suddenly became the Margaret Ferguson he had known and loved so long. Even in her gentleness there was something false and he half felt it. The slow veiling of the rich brown eyes by their long dark lashes, the warm flush over the dark, soft, peach-soft cheeks — he knew that the owner was perfectly conscious of these charms and past mistress in the use of them; yet they charmed him, as they had so often done others. "Let's talk about you, Mat," she murmured, speaking in soft, broken tones. "I'd rather talk about you than about Mexico. Tell me all your plans. Do you know, I can't help thinking papa's right? These politics are such small work. You've got it in you to do big things. Stick to law — law and business. Papa will make a place for you that will be worth while. By and by you can go into politics with money and position behind you and do something."

But his gray eyes became more earnest with the fervour of protest. "Politics are not small, as I look at it. They're big, the biggest thing in the world. By and by? And I am thirty-six now. What does by and by mean for me? My ideas are ripe, I've got a grasp on the party, I'm strong and full of courage. Why should I give the best of me to business, when, even if I succeed, the taint of it is likely to hang around me and clog me in everything I undertake? No, now is my time or never. And, Margaret, I believe in my star. Do you believe

in it? Cæsar believed in his, Napoleon believed in his. I'm not a Cæsar or a Napoleon; but my star is not a vague, indifferent lustre in heaven, twinkling and gone. My star is my idea. If I don't rise by it, some other man will. If I can get the governorship of Massachusetts, I will make the United States and the world look on at what I do. Margaret, do you think I brag? You've known me for twenty years, do you think I brag? It isn't myself I believe in, it's my idea."

No, she did not think he bragged. And even her cold heart, the heart of a ripened, selfish woman of the world, beat more quickly under the inspiration of his enthusiasm. But she was her father's daughter, hardened in sceptical distrust of ideas and people with ideas; and she did not answer.

"You know me, Margaret," he went on. His eyes were softer and changed their enthusiasm for passionate tenderness. He hesitated a moment, then came over and sat beside her on the sofa. "You know me, Margaret. Will you take my word for this future and share it with me, its struggles and disappointments, its success and glory?"

Again she made no reply. Did the drooped eyelids mean modest shyness or a cold balancing of chance?

He could not tell; but he went on, and the passion in his voice grew with the doubt: "It is ten years since I began to love you, Mar-

garet. You were eighteen then. Before that I had thought of you as a child, and merely changed laughter with you while I waited in your father's study. It was one evening in June — I remember it so well — probably you don't. Your father wasn't at home and you were sitting on the piazza. I had come in my canoe and I asked you to go out a little while. I can see you now, leaning back with the low sun streaming through your hair. I began to love you then, I have loved you ever since; but you are rich and I am poor. I have been ashamed of my love. Now, this autumn, while you were away, I made up my mind I would speak. I feel that there is at least a chance of my having something besides love to offer you. Margaret, will you take it?"

Still, for a little time, she kept her thoughts covered behind the drooped lids; but at length she spoke quietly and coldly. "You tempt me, Mat. I don't think you brag; but I think you may be deceived as to your future."

He was hurt. "And my love — is nothing?" he asked.

"Oh, love!" she answered, and her eyes opened now, almost with wonder. "Why, yes, I love you — I think I do. But at twenty-eight there are so many things one thinks of besides love. If you had talked to me about love that night you speak of — on the river — you see it would have been different."

"It is odd," he murmured, with a touch of

bitterness. "When we are young, and have the future before us, we don't trouble ourselves much about it; but the less we have left, the more we weigh it when we make our decisions."

"Just so." Her agreement was businesslike, without any bitterness at all. "The trouble is, Mat," she went on, "these are all dreams and I'm afraid you're a dreamer. I'm not — never was. And then you're on the wrong side. How do you expect to do anything with the Democrats? Supposing you were a Democratic governor, what sort of people should I have to receive — and flatter — and coax — and wheedle — their coarse Irish voices in my drawing-rooms? Oh, no, it's quite impossible." Then she turned to him and raised her eyelids just enough to give him a glimpse of the dim, soft pupils under them. "Mat," she said, with the wonderful seduction that came to her when she desired it, "Mat, you say you love me. I love you and I think you're a big man with lots of power. But you've started wrong. Give it up. Say you'll give it up. Go into some line where your power will tell now, and the rest will come afterwards." She laid her hand lightly on his. "What if I were to say I would marry you, if you gave this up, but otherwise I couldn't — risk my future — on a gambling venture?"

The eyelids drooped again and it seemed as if her head were almost ready to droop also — on to his shoulder. His fingers pressed hers un-

consciously, but for a long time he made no reply, and the agony of the struggle showed in the contraction of his face.

"Margaret," he began slowly, "I won't say you are cruel. How could I? But it is a cruel position you have placed me in. For years these two hopes together have made my life. I have seen myself carrying out my ideas with struggle and triumph and success, climbing up and up and up over the heights, each resting-place bringing a wider view and a more extended usefulness. And always you have been at my side, sharing my triumphs, adding to them the grace and perfection that you alone know how to give. How can I separate the two things? How can I have courage or hope to succeed without you? And what should I do, even with your love, if the whole fabric of my life is torn away?"

"Choose," she whispered, leaning nearer to him so that her breath warmed his cheek.

"Must I choose?" was his hoarse answer. "Why do you force on me the alternative? Cast in your lot with me. Risk something. There is no risk. I shall succeed. I will succeed. Or if I do not — "

"No," she said, more loudly and haughtily, "I will not be the wife of one who has failed or even who may fail." Again she melted and leaned still closer, and put into her voice all the wooing softness of a summer night. "Choose, choose. I want to hear you choose."

But what was best in him rebelled and conquered, for the moment. He shrank from her just a little, so that she drew her hand away. Then he turned, and looking straight at her, poured forth the torrent of his passion. "Margaret, I can't choose, I won't choose, all in a moment like that. Think what it means to me, take a week to think of it, a month to think of it. And I will do the same. These political ideas have become a duty, the deepest, strongest, overmastering duty of my life. If I am right, it means doing as much for my country as Washington did, as Lincoln did. I can't give it up. I can't give you up, Margaret, either. I've wanted you, wanted you for so many years. You say you love me. Isn't that enough? I'm going now. I'll come back in a month, unless you send for me sooner. Think of it all. Think of it. And make up your mind to do what is best for both of us."

She thought he would have clasped her in his arms, have kissed her, half-closed her eyes in expectation of it; but he did not, only took her hand and wrung it violently, then rose and went away.

CHAPTER III

Viola Buckingham was a little over twenty when her father died and left her a large fortune, no obligations, and no near relatives but her mother's aunt, Miss Tucker, who had kept house for Mr. Buckingham for a long time. After a good deal of indecision and several years of travelling in different parts of the world, Viola finally settled down with Miss Tucker in the family mansion on Beacon Hill, not feeling any desire for nearer association with the more modern elegancies of the Back Bay. She made some changes in the old house to adapt it to her habits of living. The dining-room and kitchen were transferred to the upper story, with access by elevators; and the whole back of the ground floor was turned into a great music-room, with two pianos, an organ, and every other convenience for recitals and concerts.

Sunday evening Viola was sitting at one of these pianos alone, idly running over half-remembered airs, with no other light than the dim gleam of a coloured lamp. As her mood changed, the music changed. Now she sat up straight, her tall figure swaying to some swift

scrap of a Moszkowski dance. Now she grew more thoughtful and her reverie flowed into the long passion of a Beethoven adagio. There was no finish about her playing. It was sketchy, impatient, imperfect; but she felt the music. As to that there could be no doubt whatever.

Gradually the notes fell away from any definite sequence. There came an irregular chord here and there. Then a hurried flutter of light runs. Then a broken chord again. Then Viola let her hands drop idly in her lap. It was rare for her to be so completely alone, even on Sunday, which she still preferred to reserve for a rather old-fashioned quiet; and the solitude and the darkness and the day led her to reflect vaguely on the general tenor of her life. She would be thirty years old in another month or two. What was she doing with those years? What had she done with them? She had friends whom she loved dearly, who loved her, and for whom she was able to do much. But, after all, she was not the main element in their lives. They were musicians, painters, sculptors, writers, and their art was far more to them than she. She had no art, or only all art. She had, indeed, always maintained that the passive life, the life of receptiveness, was enough, at least in æsthetic matters, that there was something vulgar about the impatience to create, something obtrusive, assertive, which did not quite square with the dignity of her aristocratic temper. Yet now suddenly she found herself won-

dering whether that thirty years had been thrown away, whether the next thirty would be thrown away likewise. She would be glad to do something in the world. Then she caught herself up with disgust. Was she getting to be just like the others, whose petty ambitions, whose trifling jealousies, whose pitiful success she had taught herself to look down upon with Olympian contempt?

At that point she was interrupted by Dudley Heath, who ushered himself into the room with a cousin's easy ways. "Good evening, Viola," he began, with much serenity.

Viola did not seem enthusiastic; and before she returned his greeting, she stepped to the electric-button and filled the room with light.

"You needn't do that, you know," he protested. Yet when he saw how beautiful she was in her long dark gown, saw the stately poise of her small head with the black hair softly parted over the low forehead, the deep, tranquil, dark eyes, the strong nose and chin, the firm mouth showing its perfect teeth in a half-smile, saw, above all, the peculiar, tranquil grace and dignity of her figure, he added, "But, on the whole, I'm glad you did."

When they were seated in arm-chairs comfortably near each other, Heath continued. "Where's your flock? I expected to have seen at least three heaven-born geniuses here, besides a dozen or so of the other kind."

"Your sarcasm is always so heavy, Dudley," she answered, in a low, tranquil voice which perfectly harmonized with her figure and which those who knew her best had rarely heard her raise.

"Sarcasm! The dozen of the other kind you surely won't deny. As to the heaven-born, I'm no judge."

"None whatever," she agreed heartily.

But he was not easily snubbed. "Come," he began again. "Talk! You can, you know. Tell me all about it. I haven't frequented your *séances* this autumn. I feel out of place. Is that natural phenomenon, your cousin George, familiarly termed Flitters, still master of the ceremonies? And that extraordinary little vulgar fiddler, McCarthy, who astonished me so much — he really was heaven-born — for the fiddle — and what a cad for anything else! And the girls — Constance Weber — handsome enough to have been born in heaven — and just intelligent enough. The Chantrey girl, too — oh, but she has a tongue — tell me about them."

"You've already told me about them — all there is to tell," was the peaceful reply. Then she began to ask questions in her turn: "Politics, Dudley, tell me about them — what your heaven-born genius is doing."

"If I were like you, you know, I shouldn't tell you a word."

"But then you aren't like me."

"That's true. More's the pity. What do you want to know about politics?"

Her manner, as she leaned back quietly, with her hands folded, did not imply an ardent desire to know anything. Nevertheless, she answered him. "The election — of course it pleased you? And I suppose you're to be at least a cabinet officer or something?"

He shook his head. "My ambitions at present lie nearer home."

"Nearer home," she echoed, still with the same languid attempt at interest, then added, "To be sure, who told me that you were to be the next governor?"

He shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

"It's true, then. I can't think, Dudley, what you see in it. I wouldn't insult you by suggesting that it might be patriotism or a sense of duty. I know you're too highly civilized to care for that sort of thing. But what is it then? Surely, there's no glory in being governor of Massachusetts, with nothing to do but pardon murderers and make after-dinner speeches. And the people — how can you bear to rub elbows with the people? To flatter saloon-keepers and wheedle labour agitators and fawn on grafters — why do you do it?"

"Patience, O most serene haughtiness! What if I were to say that I was driven to moral suicide by your cruelty? I love you,

Viola, you know. You're one of the most beautiful women in the world, when you're full of scorn like that and your nostrils broaden and your deep, soft eyes flash. I'd rather have you than the governorship."

She waved his compliments aside with an impatient gesture. "Bah!" she said. "Speak sense."

"Sense!" he repeated; then, dropping his lackadaisical manner, he went on. "It's all a game, you see, and I play it because it takes up time and makes one forget life, which is unbearable when one stops to think about it. The dirty people are nothing — just pawns and counters, which one moves — and then washes one's hands afterwards. The thing is to fight, to fight — I'd much rather kill the dirty people than fawn on them, but the fashion has gone out, you know — to fight and win — and then to begin fighting over again."

"Yes," she agreed and for a moment dropped back to her own reflections of half an hour ago. Was life a better thing to use than to stop and think about? Then she continued, with more interest than she had hitherto shown: "But for a fight there must be some one to fight with. And the governorship in Massachusetts — surely you don't expect any fight from the Democrats?"

Heath was more alert than ever. "Ah, but I do," he said. "Do you know Mat Porter?"

No, she did not know Mat Porter. Her manner implied that she did not wish to.

He went on to give her a brief sketch of Porter's career, as he had given it to Wood. Viola, indifferent at first, gradually came to listen with some appearance of interest and more of contempt. "To think," she broke out, if her quiet, restrained speech could ever be said to break out, "to think that anybody now-a-days can really believe in the people and in government by them! Or doesn't he really believe in it?"

"I'm afraid he does."

"Afraid?" The scorn of generations of aristocracy was piled into the one quiet word.

He shrugged his shoulders in apology. "I don't stand for the word. But I'd rather he didn't believe in his ideas. Somehow, the voters, fools as they are, smell out a man's hypocrisy, when he has it. This fellow's genuine and dangerous."

"That makes it more interesting, of course," said Viola thoughtfully. "I sympathize with you more than I did."

Here was Heath's opening, yet he hesitated even now to make use of it. Before he spoke, he looked at Viola, watched her thoughtful eyes and the grave power of her face, as she gazed beyond him and beyond the four walls about her at some absorbing picture of her fancy. "I want you to do more than sympathize," he said at length.

"What?" she began in astonishment. "I do something? Win votes, perhaps, and wheedle voters?"

"Not voters — the votee."

"I don't understand you."

"See here, Viola. It's just this. You say, how can this fellow believe in the people. He's never seen anything but the people. He's country bred, a minister's son, brought up with all the old claptrap, not an idea later than the middle of the last century. What he needs is some one to take him into a new world, give him society, give him art, music, manners, get him out of the narrow rut he's been bred and born in, show him indirectly the absurdity of those old, quaint, popular notions, cut his claws, in fact, without his knowing it. When he's all changed that way, he won't be dangerous any longer. And, Viola, you're the one to do it."

She had been listening intently, with her eyes half-closed, an expression of wonder creeping over her face, and suddenly giving way to disgust. Now she sat up straight. "I the one to do it? Don't you know by this time, Dudley, that I don't like women who meddle in politics, that I don't like democratic government and the rule of the people, that is to say, the mob, — and don't want to have anything to do with it?"

"But that is just the very point," he urged. "Do you suppose I like the rule of the people? But Porter does. That is what I want you to

cure him of. Infect him, oh, ever so little, with your dislike of democracy. And don't do it directly. Just spread your atmosphere around him — all those pretty girls with their art and their music and their songs, and Flitters with his nonsense. Why am I telling you how to do it, Viola? You know how better than I or any one. I don't ask you to do it for me. Do it for your country, for your order, then. You're a born aristocrat, just as I am. And the Republican party is getting to be every day more and more the party of the aristocrats. I can say it to you, you know. Do it for your own pleasure, if you like that better, just for your own pleasure in taming a wild beast."

She had watched him, in deep thought, her cheek resting on her hand, as he pleaded with such earnestness as he was capable of. It was some little time before she spoke. "Is he presentable — this — a — rival of yours?"

"Oh, surely — a gentleman in the old, plain New England way. I can't deny him that."

Again there was a pause, before she asked: "And does he go into society at all? Know any decent people?"

This time Heath answered with rather more hesitation: "It is hard to say what you would call decent people. He has always known the Fergusons, his neighbours at home."

"The Fergusons!" Viola's tone showed no enthusiasm.

"I said the Fergusons. You know them?"

"Oh, yes, I know them," she agreed. "I was on the Nile with them. And now I think of it — you and Margaret Ferguson — and Mr. Porter — why it's that Mr. Porter, is it? What a singular coincidence! To tell the truth, Dudley, I should think Margaret Ferguson might be better suited to him than to you."

Here Heath felt forced to plead his own cause a little. "Come, Viola," he said. "I like your aristocracy; but it isn't consistent. How can you turn up your nose at Margaret Ferguson and then keep company with the set you have about you — the McCarthys, and Chantreys, and the rest? Are they decent people?"

"They are artists," said Viola rather absently. "With artists there is no question of decency."

"That's very true," agreed her cousin, in hearty sympathy.

"And I've no objection to Margaret Ferguson, except that I don't like her personally. After all, perhaps she would suit you very well."

"Thank you — so much."

"But about Mr. Porter," Viola continued, still as if she were thinking of something else. "About Mr. Porter. Yes, I'll see. And supposing I should feel interested to show my patriotism in the singular fashion you suggest. How shall I get at him? Will you bring him to me? Or perhaps Miss Ferguson?"

"Flitters," answered Heath at once. "Flitters will know him. He knows every one."

Then the future governor was proceeding to give some further facts about his rival's history; but Viola interrupted. "No," she said. "I've heard enough about him for to-day. Talk of something else — anything else — yourself even."

So they talked of other things, — family affairs — social gossip — indifferently; and soon after, Heath took his leave. As he thought over the interview, he did not feel entirely satisfied. Wood was a clever man and the scheme was a clever scheme. But he did not know Viola. She was a clever woman and a woman whose eccentric motions were as incalculable as a comet's.

CHAPTER IV

The chairman of the Democratic State Committee, Robert N. Hinckley, sat alone in his private office, looking over his extensive correspondence. It was a rather bare office and rather dark, as its three large windows looked only into a narrow court surrounded by high buildings on all sides. The chairman's desk occupied the space between two windows and in the middle of the room was a mahogany table with arm-chairs about it, suggestive of executive committee meetings and profound deliberation. On the walls were portraits of Andrew Jackson, William E. Russell, and Grover Cleveland. Doubtless the list would have been longer, if there had been more distinguished persons whom all Democrats could have agreed to honour. As it was, even Cleveland had been removed and restored once, if not oftener.

Robert N. Hinckley was a short, stoutish man, fifty years old, perhaps, of Irish descent, with thick black hair parted in the middle and slightly curling, a heavy black moustache, full cheeks, and a full chin. He had got his present position and hoped to get higher by thinking first, always, and only of Robert N. Hinckley

and by saying the right thing to the right person at the right time. He was well aware that these moderate and not uncommon gifts would carry a man only just so far; but he was determined to find out by experiment how far that might be.

At present he was awaiting the arrival of one or two prominent Democrats whom he had invited to discuss, in a perfectly informal manner, the political prospects. Mike Rooney appeared first. He was a blatant, red-faced saloon-keeper from South Boston, who represented Maloney, the would-be city boss, in state matters. Maloney stuck to his own affairs, as a general thing, and did not go near the State House when he could help it. When he couldn't, he sent Rooney. And Rooney, for all his blatancy, was cunning and knew a few things. He knew how to make a man talk in that little back room of his. He knew South Boston. He knew the true principles of democracy: shout for old Ireland and fill your pockets. He knew the would-be swell members of the state committee, for instance Robert N. Hinckley, who had blacked shoes in his youth and now had a house on the water side of Beacon Street, knew they hated him and were ashamed of him; and he enjoyed making himself just as obnoxious to them as possible. Yet for all his unprofitable knowledge, there was a soft spot somewhere about Mike Rooney

such as you could never have found in the chairman.

If Hinckley hated his colleague, he did not show it, however. "Well, Mike, how goes it?" he began, when his visitor was seated and had accepted a cigar.

"Damn bad over in South Boston. No fun an' mighty little business."

"That so? Police bother you much?"

"Police! Huh!" It would be vain to attempt to express the scorn which Mike threw into the exclamation. "Say, the police'll never be any good till we get 'em into the City Hall again where they belong. Ain't that right?"

"Quite right," agreed the chairman, always mild. "And how are we to get them there?"

"Search me," said Mike, leaning back in his chair, thrusting his feet straight out before him and chewing his cigar, while he looked at the ceiling.

"I'll tell you how," Hinckley continued in his soft persuasive voice. "Get a Democratic governor and legislature."

"Where from?" inquired the saloon-keeper, unencouraged. "Hell?"

The chairman smiled sympathetically. "I don't care where they're from. But I don't think we need go so far — perhaps partly from South Boston. There's a change coming, Mike. These Republicans have had it all their own way long enough. It can't go on for ever."

"I dunno," remarked Mike, with much depression. "It's an awful strong graft they've got."

"So it is; but, after all, the strongest thing about them is that they hang together. The day when the Democrats pick out a good man and all stand by and support him and show up the Republican graft for what it is — "

"It's a Sunday-school picnic to what the Democratic graft'd be," interrupted the cynical South Bostonian.

"Nonsense, you're babes compared to some of those gentlemen who have grown hoary in it. And I tell you, Mike, when that day comes, it'll be a good thing to belong to the Massachusetts Democracy."

"All right, all right," was the unenthusiastic rejoinder. "But before that they'll have automobile hearses and I'll have had a ride in one."

There was a brief silence before Hinckley again took up the thread. "Know anything of Mat Porter over your way?"

Then Rooney pulled his feet under him and withdrew his much-chewed cigar from his lips. "Say, is he your man?" he bellowed. "Is it him you're workin' for? Do you think you're goin' to get all kind of Democrats to stand for him?"

"What does Maloney say to him?" asked the chairman unmoved.

"Maloney don't have nothin' to do with state

politics." And Maloney's representative half-closed one red eye. "It's my own idea I'm givin' you and nobody else's. But that Porter — he's one o' them honest ones. And you know what that means. It means gettin' your friend in a tight place and then throwin' him over. Why, you can't tell what a feller like that'll do. I've watched him up at the State House. He's always pushin' for some notion or other that nobody wants. Porter!"

"He's a very sincere reformer, I believe," suggested Hinckley, with simple earnestness.

"Reform nothin'!" snorted Rooney in contempt. "Who wants reform? Sincere? Come now, old man, you don't want reform nor Porter. What's this all about?"

The chairman smiled his gentle smile. "Then you think he isn't just the candidate for South Boston?"

"Well, I guess not, nor for North Boston, either. An' you know it. You're just workin' a great big bluff anyway. Why not me for governor, hey?"

This brilliant suggestion was interrupted by the entrance of another prominent Democrat, somewhat different from either of those already present. Tom Burke was a gentleman, that very charming thing, an Irish gentleman. His face was red and bluff, like Rooney's, but with a different redness and a heartier bluffness. He had a rich wife and was a fairly successful law-

yer; but he could not let politics alone and went at them with a simple vanity which rascals played upon.

"Hello, boys," he said, shaking hands cordially, though it seemed that he and Rooney treated each other with a certain mistrust, which showed chiefly in exaggerated courtesy. "Got the next governor all picked? Seems a little early, doesn't it?"

"Mike here was just saying he thought he could pull it off," answered Hinckley.

"Good. That's right. He could carry his own ward anyway and that's more than some of us could do." Burke removed his fur-lined coat, as he spoke, and made himself comfortable with one of Hinckley's cigars, which had a wide reputation. "Well," he continued, "if there's any good thing going let me into it."

"Of course it's early to talk anything serious yet," began the chairman, in his slow, soft voice. "But you can't start these things too soon. We've got to win out next autumn. Now that Worcester's through and Graham's dead, the Republicans have nobody but Heath. Heath's a bright man. He's done some good work in the senate and he has Wood behind him. But people don't trust him. I think we've got a chance."

"We have," nodded Burke in approval. "And to win, we must have a popular man that will carry the party with him."

There was no disputing this; so for awhile

the three sat and meditated on it in silence. At length Hinckley spoke again, to Burke. "What about Porter?"

Burke's face lengthened. He looked at Rooney and saw Rooney's open disgust. "Porter?" he repeated non-committally. "Are you for Porter?"

"Are you?"

"Porter's a strong man. There's no doubt about that. But I guess he'll get about as many Republican votes as he will Democratic."

"That's right," agreed Rooney, with much satisfaction. "Porter ain't no Democrat."

"They do say," went on Hinckley, with the utmost gentleness and as if he were asking information rather than giving it, "they do say he's got quite a following in the factory towns, after what he did last spring."

"Yes; but you can't tell what he'll do next spring. That's the trouble."

"He's got notions," grumbled Rooney.

"Ideas some call them," the chairman suggested, always softly and with a meditative air.

"I believe in ideas as much as any man," Burke agreed, as if he had actually had such things.

"Of course we all believe in them," Hinckley went on. "The only thing is, when a man gets them, you can't tell just where they'll lead him."

"That's so. He may begin a good Democrat. But by the time his ideas are through

with him, they may land him outside the party altogether."

"Ideas are never through with a man till he's dead," was the chairman's sententious comment on this. "Once he hitches his cart to them, they drag him along up hill and down, through briars, mud, and everything. And it's apt to be bad for those who ride in the cart."

"Then you ain't for Porter, after all?" asked Rooney, making the practical deduction that appealed to him.

"I? Oh, I'm for the party and the man that'll win. If the party wants Porter and will back him up, Porter's good enough for me."

But Burke looked discontented. "I don't trust him," he murmured.

"Whom do you trust?" inquired Hinckley, apparently with a real desire to be told.

At this point Rooney, still practical, cut in again. "Here's my candidate," pointing to Burke, with a grin that was meant to be flattering and conciliatory.

"Bah!" said Burke. It was with just such a "bah" that Cæsar put aside the crown. "I thought your candidate was Michael Rooney, Esquire."

"Don't you know a joke when you hear it?"

"Which is the joke?"

Here the chairman took up the subject. "Mike is right," he said. "There are a good many Democrats that don't know what to make of Porter. They'd vote for him, if he was put

up. But they know you, Mr. Burke, and they'd follow you into the campaign with more confidence, I'm sure. To tell the truth — "

But just as Hinckley was starting on what must surely have been one of the great adventures of his life, enter Pete Smith, the labour leader, tall, square-headed, square-jawed, with heavy forehead, thin, light hair, and frank blue eyes.

After hand-shaking, Smith remarked, in his dry, straightforward way: "The next campaign is all settled by this time, I suppose."

"No, we were waiting for you," answered the chairman.

"All right, then I'll settle it. I believe Porter's the man."

No reply. Rooney thrust out his feet and smoked at the ceiling. Burke looked down and played with his watch chain. Hinckley gazed at the speaker with an inscrutable air of quiet attention.

"Well," went on the labour leader, after a moment, "he doesn't seem to be your man."

"We're for the party, not for any man," suggested Hinckley, as he had done before.

"Is that so? Now I'm for the party with the right man to lead it."

"Don't think I'm against Porter," Hinckley went on quietly. "If the party wants him, I want him. He's a strong man. Only perhaps he's a little too strong."

"Can't be," was Smith's brief answer.

"See, Smith," interrupted Rooney, without removing his eyes from the ceiling. "Porter ain't no labour man."

"He's a Democrat, and so am I. I don't believe in splitting up parties. Didn't Porter do good work for labour on the factory bill last spring?"

"Yes, but next spring he may take a turn the other way," suggested Burke, speaking for the first time.

Smith knew perfectly well what Burke's aspirations were and did not sympathize with them. "I'll wait till he does," he said. "I don't want a man to agree with me always, if I believe he means right."

"Do you know what Porter does mean?" asked Hinckley, with his inimitable expression of a desire for useful knowledge.

"I'm going to find out," was the frank answer. "Perhaps he may mean something I can't stand for. But if he talks as straight as I think he will, I'll vote for him and work for him."

"He don't know what he means himself," growled Rooney. "With that kind of feller it's first one big word and then another, and all the time it's Mat Porter and nobody else. If you go in for Mat Porter, you're all right and can have what he leaves. If you say a word for yourself, he'll throw you over."

"Mr. Rooney puts it pretty strongly," remarked Burke; "but there's something in what

he says. Porter's got a lot of good ideas; but he seems ready to follow them anywhere, whether they lead away from the party lines or not. You can't do anything with men without parties."

"You can't do anything with parties without men," was Smith's prompt rejoinder. "And any man that is a man will follow his own ideas and not some other feller's. I'm glad to get hold of a man that's got ideas to follow." Then, turning abruptly to Hinckley, he added: "So you're all against Porter, are you?"

But Hinckley was not disturbed. "As I said before, we're for the party. If the party wants Porter, we want him."

"We are the party," answered Smith in his sharp fashion. "What we say will go, if we say it together and loud enough. But I see you aren't any of you ready to say Porter. Well, I'm not ready myself yet. When I've found out more about him and seen him and had a talk, I'll let you know where I stand. I don't see as I'm doing any good here just now."

So saying, the labour leader took himself off.

The three who remained looked at each other, somewhat discontented.

"Our friend Smith is apt to be in a hurry," remarked Hinckley, with a gentle smile.

"In too damned much of a hurry," Rooney growled under his big moustache.

"Of course Porter's a good man?" suggested Burke. Then there was a pause during

which somebody might have mentioned that there was a better.

As nobody did so, Burke, too, got up and took his leave, with rather less cordiality than he had shown on entering.

Rooney followed him, after a word or two of humourous disgust, exchanged with the chairman. "Say, old man, don't you think it might as well be me, after all?"

"Perhaps it might, Mike," laughed Hinckley, as he shook hands with his creditable follower. "I don't see but you'd make as good a governor as any of them. At any rate, a man would know where to find you."

"Where?" asked the member from South Boston, with a magnificent wink.

"Where the loot is," was the genial, jovial answer.

CHAPTER V

HEATH was dining with the Fergusons. During the earlier courses Porter's name had been kept out of the conversation by common, though tacit, consent. But with the good claret, reserve faded, and Heath suggested, smiling cynically: "You should have asked our next governor to meet me."

Mr. Ferguson finished dissecting a chicken. Then he answered: "Mat Porter? Poor boy. He's making a fool of himself — or will, if he doesn't change his mind soon. Our next governor is sitting here now."

"Thanks awfully. His excellency prefers light meat, if you don't mind."

"Mat is a good fellow," went on the ex-cotton broker, with all his sweet benignity of patronage. "But he isn't practical. He's got a lot of ideas from a man up in Foxbridge — just a literary man, you know, who never held an office nor earned a dollar in his life — ideas about state government and all that. Now a young man can't make his way with ideas in his pocket. They're as heavy as gold and as useless as lead. A young man's got to adapt himself — unless he's born with a silver spoon in his mouth, like you, Mr. Heath."

Heath bowed his acknowledgment of the compliments of Ferguson and Fortune. "You adapted yourself," he said to his host.

"Well, yes, I did adapt myself. It's just like getting through a crowd in the street. You can't stand straight and square your arms and drive right along to what you want; you've got to make yourself as thin as a postage stamp and duck and twist and turn and slip through holes where you'd think a mouse couldn't pass. Then by and by the road gets clearer and you spread out a little."

"I can't see Mat shifting and turning," said Margaret thoughtfully.

"No," answered her father, "he can't. And that's where he is bound to fail. He has no money, and a man can't start in the world as it is nowadays — and I don't believe it was ever very different — and do anything, unless he has money. Of course, I don't think money's everything in itself. There are other things that are a great deal more than money."

"What things?" inquired Heath, in his chilly fashion, while Ferguson paused for a little dinner.

And Margaret echoed, with equal coldness, "What things? Tell us, papa dear."

When papa was ready to resume the conversation, he resumed it as if mildly horrified. "What things? There's a frank cynicism about your generation that wouldn't have suited

mine. I suppose you've heard of such things as honour and friendship and religion?"

"Oh, yes, of course," Heath answered, an expression of profound enlightenment in his manner. "I didn't understand that you meant those. When you said other things that are more than money, I supposed you meant more amusing than money. I wanted to hear about them."

Mr. Ferguson was silent for awhile. Conventions were an important element of his life. They were desirable in one's self, convenient in others, and in the ideal of a governor absolutely indispensable. They might be occasionally violated for profit, though never without regret and apology. But to speak slightingly of them was worse than wrong, it was foolish. Still, he recognized that the coming age did things differently. And the coming age sometimes did them very well.

By and by Heath returned to the subject. "So you think Porter has mistaken his vocation?"

"No," Ferguson answered, with renewed cheerfulness. "His vocation is law and he couldn't have a better one. Let him stick to it. With his brains there's money in law. There's no money in the governorship, even if he could get it."

"That's encouraging for me."

"You want better things than money, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot. Still, they do say that some governors make money."

"Not in Massachusetts," murmured the millionaire solemnly. "It can't be done here."

"Well, then, we'll be content with the better things — and let Porter have the money."

But Margaret wanted more part in the conversation and she did not want to talk of Porter just then, so she introduced a little social gossip which enlivened the dessert.

After dinner Mr. Ferguson went out and left the young people alone in the cosy little reception-room, with a dim light and the latter end of a sea-coal fire. This was Margaret's element. She was too cold, too unresponsive to shine in general society; but in the twilight she could put extraordinary meanings into her voice. She herself could hardly have counted up the number of men she had fascinated and thrown over in that reception-room. But she was nearly thirty now and the throwing-over time was approaching an end.

As for Heath, he might be thrown over, but he was hardly fascinated. He was over thirty; and though he had money of his own, he wanted more — and any better things that were going.

The two sat in easy-chairs, side by side, facing the fire. Margaret's hand rested carelessly on the arm of her chair, and in a little while Heath's hand rested on hers. Up to that time they had not spoken, or not to the purpose.

At length Heath began, softly and absently,

as one does in the firelight. "You've heard of Lincoln and Douglas, perhaps?"

"Lincoln and Douglas?" she repeated, with inquiry in her tone.

"Yes, Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln."

"I have heard of Abraham Lincoln. Do you think you resemble him?"

"Well, no, but I daresay Porter thinks he does. You see, they both wanted to marry the same woman, both to be Illinois Senator, and both to be President of the United States."

"I know about the presidency," she answered, with mild interest. "Who got the woman?"

"Lincoln, too."

"And you think Mat resembles Lincoln?"

The hand rested on hers more heavily. "I think so? No. I don't think he'll get either the woman or the presidency. But I thought the analogy might amuse your idle hours — if you have any."

"I have no others."

Once more they watched the fire. "Just stir it up a little, will you?" Margaret suggested.

He stirred it up. Then he sat down again, with his hand in the same place and spoke once more. "I think we might as well settle our affairs, Margaret, don't you?"

"Your affair, you mean?" She half withdrew her hand, but let it slip back. "Do you want me to settle your affair?"

"It will be ours in the end, I hope." His voice did not show much quaver of amorous uncertainty.

"You think so? And do you really love me so much?"

"Tongue cannot tell how much. The needle is not attracted to the pole with more unerring vehemence. Hunt up the most beautiful poetry you can find, saturated with love, and charge to my account. I'll stand for it."

She drew her hand away, sat up in her chair, turned, and looked straight at him. "That's all very well," she said. "You think I laugh at love just as you do; but I like it all the same. Every woman does. I want some one to be attracted to me, like the needle to the pole. I want some one to say poetry to me in the moonlight. I want some one to love me, to love me, to love me."

"Do you love any one?" he asked calmly, half turning his face towards her, but not changing his position.

"Not you, at any rate." She subsided again into the bottom of her chair; but this time she kept her hands in her lap.

"Any one?" he repeated in the same tone.

"I don't see that that makes any difference," was her petulant answer.

"Perhaps not. And you think Mat Porter loves you?"

"Don't you think so?"

"Get your father to sell all he has and give

to the poor, and then see if he does. It's the only test."

To this she made no answer.

Then in a moment, Heath sat up in his turn and began to speak more seriously. "I admire Porter — and at the same time I despise him. He has the making of about half a man in him — or, if you like, two half men. He doesn't know what he wants. He thinks he wants to save his country and benefit his fellow creatures and work a great reform for the good of posterity. What he really wants, first and foremost, is to benefit Mat Porter; and all those other pretty little notions, excellent in themselves, are a handy way of doing it. Now I'm working for Dudley Heath and I know it, though I've no objection to doing a good turn for the country, too, if it comes right. It's the man who knows what he wants who has a chance of getting it, in this world."

"What do you want?" she asked, half with unconscious coquetry, half as if she were thinking of something else.

"You," he answered, short and sharp, reaching over abruptly to catch her in his arms.

But she eluded him. "No," she said, with perfect calmness, "not yet, not yet. Even the man who knows what he wants doesn't always get it as soon as he wants it."

"Ah, well," was the cynical reply. "I'm in no great hurry. Think it over. But don't be fooled with the phantom of Porter's ambition.

I'm going to be the next governor of this state. I've got the whole strength of the Republican party behind me solid. And even the little feeble machinery the Democrats have, won't hear anything of Porter."

So he took his leave and Margaret stayed in the big arm-chair by the fire, thinking.

When her father came home he attempted to plead with her as Heath had been pleading. "It's the chance of your life," he urged. "Look at the way he's gone ahead. He's sure to be governor. He's in with all the big men in the state."

"Do you consider him a noble character?" she asked. It amused her to tease her honoured parent with these little ironies.

Her honoured parent never understood them. "It isn't so easy to tell the noble characters. They don't always put on the noble airs."

"No. And Dudley's airs are very noble, aren't they?"

"What do you mean? Still thinking of Mat, I suppose?"

"Perhaps I love Mat."

"Love!" said the honoured parent, as if the waiter had handed him pinks instead of cauliflower.

"Love, yes. Don't you believe in it?"

"Oh, if you love Mat, of course. But I'll tell you, Margaret, if he marries you, he's got to give up this governorship idea."

"Got to?"

"Yes, got to. That is, if he expects I'm going to give you anything to live on, and how are you going to live as you're used to living, if I don't? You know, as well as I do, that he never'll be elected — a Democratic governor, with fads. How would you feel, to be the wife of a man who's made himself ridiculous?"

"I shouldn't like it," she agreed cordially.

"Of course you wouldn't. Take my word for it, you'd better patch it up with Heath. But if you must have Mat, get the nonsense out of him. Have him here to dine and talk him over. You know what I told him the other day. He ought to stick to law for ten years and make money and then go into politics. That's the way to do something. He's a good lawyer — none better. I can get him a berth in the law office of the road where he can go right to the top."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't suit him."

"If it won't, I don't think he'll suit me — or you. Will you?"

"I'll think it over."

Then the young lady retired for the night and thought it over. And she thought it over for many nights afterward. She did not share her father's confidence that Porter might be persuaded to give up politics. She knew her lover too well for that. No, he would probably persevere, no matter whether he failed or succeeded. Could he succeed? What if she should wait and see, should bid him come to her when

he was governor, and not till then? But, once more, she knew him too well. He wanted love and what had love to do with such a cold-blooded proposition as that? It might end in her losing him altogether and Heath also, with the dreary perspective of old maidenhood looming up in their places. Besides, as she had said to Porter, a Democratic governor! And a Democratic governor's wife! So her long debates usually ended where her father's suggestion had left her.

CHAPTER VI

Tuesday was Viola's regular evening for the gathering of what she called her family and on the Tuesday before Christmas the assembly in the music-room was almost complete. Under the full glare of the electric light, a varied company, mainly girls in gay attire, chattered and laughed, one merry group shifting into another; and the hostess, serene and stately, moved among them all, listening, smiling, now and then saying a quiet word which was welcome to every one.

Miss Tucker, Viola's great aunt, seventy-five years old, round and kindly, always as sleepy as a cat, always knitting something white and soft for a fair, nodded on a sofa in a corner and would have slept, but Laura Wells and Flora Chantrey were determined she shouldn't. Laura was a journalist, dark, with blue eyes. She gave a peculiar impression of having lost all her illusions too young; but it may be she had never had any. She was as brief and snappy as one of her own write-ups. Flora, who sang religious music Sundays and irreligious the rest of the week, was longer, but just as snappy. She had pale blue eyes, an irregular nose, a

broad mouth, endless humour just a little cynical.

"About these church fairs, Miss Tucker," began Flora, "do you approve of them?"

Miss Tucker lifted her heavy lids with an effort: "Approve of them? Why not?"

"They make a great deal of trouble, you know," the soprano continued.

"Trouble? Do they? They never made me any trouble."

"I should think knitting shawls two or three hours a day all my life was a good deal of trouble."

"Bless you, no, dear. It would trouble me now not to knit them. And then at our fair we see so many pleasant people."

"But don't they talk a good deal of scandal?" Flora inquired, as solemnly as if her conversation were always confined to yea and nay.

"Scandal?" Miss Tucker reflected. The subject was serious. "Why, no, I don't think I ever heard any."

But now Laura took a hand. "And the gambling! They talk about bridge. When I first went on the *Star* I used to write up fairs sometimes. The way those deacons and elders would run a raffle, and the voting contests, and the mean little tricks to pile up a big vote. It was a caution."

"Is that gambling?" asked Miss Tucker, a

trifle wider awake. "Why, I got a prize in a voting contest last year myself."

"For the most popular old lady in town?" Flora suggested.

"I never knew exactly what it was for."

"Depend upon it that was it," chimed in Laura. "And in that case there didn't need to be any politics at all about it."

Meantime Ruth Nelson was carrying on a desultory conversation with Wingate, the millionaire proprietor of the *Boston Intelligencer,* who had inherited brains and money from his father and from his mother a pair of great brown eyes. Wingate had long been a friend, and in the early days a lover, of Viola's. Now, at thirty-four, he wanted to marry Ruth's brown hair and soft, sweet dimples, and unconscious coquetry. He more than suspected that Ruth would never marry him, even that she cherished an absurd, romantic affection for the extraordinary musical genius of that parentless, penniless, mindless, mannerless young creature, Eugene McCarthy. But Wingate was a steady, loyal sort of person; and when he wanted a thing, he tried hard and long to get it.

"Do you think Mr. McCarthy will play for us to-night?" asked Ruth.

"I hope so — if you do."

"Don't you? Don't you love to hear him play?" Ruth's voice always had enthusiasm in it and a peculiar husky quality left over from

scarlet fever, which made her enthusiasm sound even more breathless than it was.

"To tell the truth, playing, violin-playing doesn't mean very much to me."

"Oh, I'm so sorry for you."

Wingate was rather sorry for himself.

But the fair enthusiast continued the subject. "And he's such a remarkable person, Mr. McCarthy is. Never had any education at all, you know."

"Yes, I've noticed that."

"Don't be ill-natured, Mr. Wingate. Such people as he don't need education. It's only we common mortals."

The proprietor of the *Intelligencer* was completely crushed and for the moment ventured no further interruption.

"They're born to know everything they need to know," she went on. "And we know so many things we don't need at all. It must be beautiful to live in a world of music all the time, as he does, to dream music, to breathe music, to eat music."

"Perhaps a little unsubstantial?" suggested the more earthly lover.

"No, no. Those beautiful things are the substance that really lasts. If we could only keep our lives full of them all the time!"

"But, you see, we can't. There is so much scraping and grinding and caterwauling all around us."

"We ought not to listen to it. And don't

some wise people say that even the ugly sounds harmonize, if we have music in our souls?"

"I don't know," was the slightly plaintive answer. "I'm afraid I haven't music in my soul. I'm not like McCarthy. And to tell you the truth, I'm rather glad I'm not. For I think these people who are always walking about with their ears turned upward, listening for celestial music, are apt to end by a fall in the mud."

"I don't want to think you are a Philistine, Mr. Wingate. Isn't it our duty to take care of the practical for such people? To see that the mud is dried and swept up before them? I think we owe them that for the gift they bring us."

"Perhaps so," murmured the Philistine, unconvinced. At the moment he felt that so far from keeping McCarthy out of the mud, he should be very glad to push him in and see him flounder.

While Miss Nelson was delivering her eulogy, the unconscious subject of it was talking to Viola, to her cousin Grace Buckingham, the soft, blue-eyed, golden-haired painter of miniatures and delicate water-colours, and to Constance Weber, tall, dark, willowy, who looked like Juno and had no intelligence to speak of. Constance could play the piano with marvellous technique, but music meant no more to her than anything else under God's heaven.

I said McCarthy was talking, but he was not,

not even listening. His squat, heavy figure was humped awkwardly in a big easy-chair, and his sparkling black eyes wandered to Ruth and Wingate, while Grace was asking Viola questions about George Buckingham, alias Flitters.

"Yes," said Viola, "I expect him to-night, for the first time this season. He came back from Europe three weeks ago and I've seen him once or twice; but last Tuesday he was in New York and somewhere else the week before."

"And he is the same as always, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, George never changes. That is, if you can say he's ever twice the same."

"No, of course not," Grace agreed. "That's his charm. What a lot of new songs he must have!"

"Songs?" interjected McCarthy, as if some one had stepped on his toe.

"Yes," said Grace. "That rouses you, Mr. McCarthy, doesn't it? Do you know George?"

"George?"

"George Buckingham."

"No, I don't know him. I thought you mentioned songs."

"So I did. He sings them."

But Mr. McCarthy shrugged his shoulders, as if George Buckingham's singing didn't interest him. And Constance at length entered into the conversation, with her slow, deep voice: "What did you call this — Mr. Buckingham? I never can remember."

"Flitters," said Grace.

"Why?"

"How should I know. Because he flits."

"Flits?"

"Flits. From one idea to another. From one mood to another. From one song to another."

Here Flora Chantrey, who had just joined the group, and was leaning on the back of Viola's chair, took up the strain: "From one girl to another. Flit! Flit! Flit! Like a lazy, gorgeous, sun-loving butterfly, who has nothing else to do, as Flitters hasn't — and plenty to live on, as Flitters has. When the butterfly comes, in his flitting, to a big, red, wide-open rose, like you, Constance Weber, he will balance himself on it, for a moment, with a lazy sweep of his wings — and then flit. You're warned, Constance Weber."

Constance's big, dark eyes showed the puzzle of her bewildered brain. But Viola interposed. "Nonsense, Flora! George cares nothing about girls, Constance, except to laugh and sing with them, as he does with men, or by himself."

But it may be doubted whether Viola's rebuke was not as much intended to be fraught with warning as Flora's outburst.

"Well, Flitters he is, at any rate," Flora went on. "A sort of celestial fool — he would say so himself — whose folly consists not so much in not knowing as in not caring, a clown of the old time, stolen from Fairyland to Bos-

ton, and not out of place, either; for it is the essence of creatures of that strain not to be out of place anywhere. What is his latest folly, Viola?"

"Hanks's suspenders," answered Viola softly.

"What?" demanded all three girls together.

"Hanks's suspenders. In Norway George happened to foregather with the millionaire manufacturer of those useful articles, and as they were standing, looking at the midnight sun, — so George says — Mr. Hanks — Napoleon B. his name is, I understand — suggested that George would be just the one to write their advertisements."

"I suspect Flitters made the suggestion himself," chuckled Flora.

"Well, so do I," Viola agreed.

"But," asked Grace, with some hesitation, "isn't it just a trifle vulgar? I do hate to have George grow vulgar."

Viola lifted her shoulders imperceptibly, but Flora turned on the speaker at once. "Grace, you ought to know better. Nothing that Flitters does or says or thinks could be vulgar. He is a born grand gentleman, which just fills full the measure of his folly. And he is most piquant when he touches the stupid commonplaces of vulgar people, because he loves them, don't you see, and everything human is beautiful to him. He doesn't get bitter and irritated over the mob, as I do. Isn't it true, Viola?"

"I don't know about your getting bitter."

Viola smiled kindly at her friend's enthusiasm. "And George certainly has a whole-hearted defender in you. He does come rather near the line of vulgarity sometimes, to my coarser apprehension; but, as you say, one feels love back of it — Ah, here he is."

Constance, who had been listening, spiritually open-mouthed, to this singular description, turned her eyes to the doorway. In it there stood, under the half-lifted *portière,* the figure of a very ordinary man, thirty years old, perhaps. He wore evening dress, well made. He was tall, slight, stooping a trifle, his features were regular and agreeable, his mouth broad, his eyes pale blue, his hair sandy and thinnish, his face clean-shaven.

At the general shout of "Flitters!" he came forward quickly, with both hands extended. "Bless you, my children, bless you, bless you." But his manner was so quiet, so gentle, so unobtrusive, that for all his odd ways, no one would ever have thought of calling him affected. His oddities were inborn and every one was winning.

"Lady Viola," he bowed over her hand and kissed it. "What, my dear Lady Disdain," — to Flora — "I hope I may hear your voice again, but not your tongue. And Laura, with her journalistic acridities. Ruth, with her dimples, dimples, dimples. And Grace — ah, one may kiss a cousin. Wingate, that sheet of yours is getting more offensive every day."

A dead stop, as he came to McCarthy.

"Mr. McCarthy, a new friend, our violinist," interposed Viola.

"Oh, yes, I've heard of him and want to hear him."

"And Miss Constance Weber," added the hostess.

"Miss Weber — the violin also?"

"Piano," from Flora.

"Just so — all these celebrities — and I who am nothing — but then one has no reputation to support and can just enjoy one's self."

He slipped into a big chair and the others seated themselves, somewhat nearer together than before.

"But surely I interrupted some profitable conversation," he began. "Go on."

"We were only talking about you and Hanks's suspenders," suggested Flora.

"To be sure — Napoleon B. Hanks. Do you know him? He's a great man — a really great man. But I'll tell you one odd thing. He doesn't wear his own suspenders — any more than I do. Do you, Mr. McCarthy? No? You ought. There's absolutely nothing like them. I tell Hanks it's disgraceful. Some day, when I get through writing his ads, I'm going to show him up. Don't you suppose Armour eats his own beef? Or Douglas wears his own shoes? Or Beaman chews his own gum? They must. Anything else would be impossible."

"But about the ads?" inquired Wingate.

"Oh, the ads. Every one of you must make one. You can't do less for me. Come, Viola, begin."

But Viola did not respond, nor any one else.

"That means you won't; for I won't insult you by supposing that you can't. It's the easiest thing in the world.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us
From any other kind but Hanks's suspenders."

"George," murmured Grace, collecting her senses, "you don't mean that you're responsible for the odious vulgarity that flings itself in my face every morning from the car when I ride down town."

"'Buy Hanks's or bust.' 'Hanks's patent eats up five pairs of pants and pants for more.'

'If you buy a new garment to cover your shanks,
Just make it complete with a new pair of Hanks's.'

'To avoid suspense wear Hanks's suspenders.' 'You can wear them inside, you can never wear them out.' Mine, mine, all mine."

The inspired framer of these winning words repeated them in his soft, abstracted tones, with a happy innocence which was more perfect than the words themselves.

"George," remonstrated Viola, "why will you condescend to such vulgarity as that?"

George answered, as softly and as absently

as ever, with no attempt to argue the question. "There's only one vulgarity, my dear cousin, and that is the effort to appear something you're not, to ape and strain after airs and manners you're not born to, to gape with oyster-mouth for the ideas and words and fashions of others. Our middle-class, with its pseudo-elegance and its common-school correctness is vulgar; but the people, when they speak right out in their free, joyous, happy abundance of slang, aren't vulgar — only natural. This is a great country, my friends, and we, the set of Boston, are such a little bit of it, we don't count. There are in the neighbourhood of thirty millions who ought to wear Hanks's suspenders, and you've got to talk to them in their own tongue. I enjoy it."

"That is to say," suggested Flora, "you make an effort to appear something you're not, you ape and strain after manners you're not born to, you gape with oyster-mouth for the ideas and words and fashions of others."

The general laughter and approval with which this was received did not disturb the supporter of Hanks's. "Good," he said. "I recognize my old adversary. And I am vulgar, I suppose. But perhaps you'd like me to sing you a song that isn't."

He went to the piano and preluded softly and vaguely, then sang, to an air that had a lovely, simple, old-world grace about it:

"Do not think to win my heart
With a lovesick mien,
Sighing when we meet and part,
Sighing all between.

"Come a-wooing gaily dressed,
Flaunt thy cap and feather.
So perchance some idle jest
May bring our lips together."

McCarthy had paid little attention to the newcomer hitherto; but it was pretty to see him wake up at the first strains of the music. When it ceased, he went to the piano. "Who wrote that?" he asked, in his abrupt, almost rough fashion.

"I," answered Flitters, without looking up, his fingers still echoing a note or two of the air.

McCarthy leaned on the piano and looked at him, with snapping eyes. "You must be a genius."

But Flitters continued, quite indifferent. "I've been told so before; but I'm not. I'm nothing, a shred of mist, a bit of a morning dream, a scrap of an old song. Now this is more Viola's style." He struck into a rattling dance-hall air and sang a ballad of which one verse will probably suffice the reader:

"Sarah Sampson loved a coon
As black as Sarah's shoe.
Sarah's mother swat the coon
And swatted Sarah too."

"That yours?" asked McCarthy, when the performance was finished.

Flitters nodded.

"Well, it's not like the other, but it's good all the same."

"Look here," interrupted Wingate, "why don't you two write a comic opera?"

"Just what I want," cried Flitters, rising eagerly. "I don't know anything about music; but I was turning over an idea the other day. I'll tell you what it was." He took McCarthy by the arm and led him off to a corner of the room. "No, no," he cried, "you chattering girls keep away. This is a serious conclave — the profane are not needed."

"Well," said Viola, "now the music has begun we must keep it up. Flora?"

"I'm perfectly willing," said Flora. "Nobody ever called me a genius and I haven't got a pocketful of assorted inspirations of my own. But I can sing Chaminade and De Bussy."

She sang Chaminade and De Bussy, with a rich, ringing soprano voice, absolutely true and full of passion. Even Flitters and McCarthy stopped talking comic opera for a moment to listen and applaud.

Then Constance played Tschaikovski, played it with singular brilliancy, but that was all. The comic operators applauded again; but the applause was briefer and had less heart in it.

"Now," said Viola, "it's your turn, Mr. McCarthy. Leave your plotting and come and play to us."

Everybody but Flitters, who did not like in-

terruption, joined eagerly in this request. Nevertheless McCarthy refused, and Viola, knowing his moods, did not press the point. Instead, she took her guests up in the elevator to the dining-room at the top of the house and there they had supper. Viola's suppers were not the least important part of her entertainment; they were not pretentious, but there was always something rare and new and piquant in the way of salads, fruits, or ices.

"You'll have to come to smoking, Viola," urged Flitters, "to letting us smoke and smoking yourself for company. It's done everywhere."

"No," said Viola, with quiet decision. "So is bridge done everywhere. If you want bridge and smoke, you may go everywhere — else. I don't think cards a fit occupation for creatures who have brains and tongues and I'm too old-fashioned to smoke or to have others smoke in my presence. But, George, I want to speak to you a moment."

"Speak," he answered, "for years."

She led him to a quiet sofa, while the others continued chatting and eating about the table.

"Do you know Mr. Matthew Porter, George?" she began.

"Of course I know Mat Porter."

"How did you come to know him?"

Flitters reflected a second. "How does one come to know any one? At some club or other, I suppose."

"Does he go to clubs?"

"Well, now you speak of it, I should say not often."

"Do you like him?"

The volatile again took a moment to condense his thoughts. "Porter's a man," he said.

"He wants to be governor, I'm told."

"Well, I imagine he's not above those weaknesses."

"And," went on Viola, "I'm told he's a radical, believes in the people, all that sort of thing."

Flitters laughed his cordial, human laugh. "He can't be more of a radical than I am, Vi. I believe in the people. I love the people. I love their dirty, frank, rough ways. You know I do."

"But you don't believe in government by the people?"

"I don't believe in government by anybody. It's an absurdity and only those who are absurd ever attempt it. When men can rule themselves, they won't need any government. And until they can rule themselves, government is of little use. I'm an anarchist, I think."

"But you're not serious. Mr. Porter is."

"You mean I don't want to be governor. That's true enough."

Here Viola let the subject drop for a time, and her cousin, who apparently had no desire to continue it, gazed at the pretty groups across

the room, Ruth and Flora scolding McCarthy for not playing, Grace and Laura entreating Miss Tucker to drink champagne, which was against her principles, although she had none.

"I wish you would bring Mr. Porter here," said Viola abruptly.

"Do you?" asked Flitters, still keeping his eyes on distance. "Now why? Such a whim would be natural enough for me; but you reasonable people must give reasons."

"I want to see him."

"And convert him?" The jester turned and looked at her, with roguery in the pale blue eyes. "The missionary spirit is so strong in all women! They can't seem to believe in their own ideas except when they're persuading somebody else to believe in them. But, Viola, I don't think he'd come — and I'm not sure I want him."

"Why?"

"Well, there are some of your set here now who are over-serious compared to me, who take life with painful seriousness, — I mention no names; but every one of them is a will o' the wisp of careless frivolity compared to Porter. He couldn't understand us, he wouldn't like us, he'd have no patience with us. Just think of it — a man who wants to reform the world!"

"But he knows no better," urged Viola, apologetically.

"And he never will. And what is more, my

lady cousin, I have a terrible suspicion, way down in the bottom of my heart, that you're just like him."

"But will you bring him here?" she persisted, sticking to her point.

"Oh, certainly, if you wish it," he answered, quite indifferent to his own objections.

Then they all went down-stairs again and had more music and more laughter. McCarthy still obstinately refused to play; but Constance played and Flora sang and Flitters, and Laura recited one piece of drollery and Flitters capped it with another, and Viola sat and watched it all, chatting vaguely with Wingate, and the fun continued fast and furious till midnight was close at hand.

At last some one mentioned going and the girls began to make their preparations, in spite of Flitters's energetic protest. "Why go?" he urged. "Now comes in the sweet o' the night. Why go? Always this going — out of comfort and song and laughter into the darkness. Why do such things?"

"But sleep?" suggested Grace.

"The most absurd excuse ever invented for interrupting pleasure. Sleep when you have nothing else to do, when you are hearing dull sermons and improving lectures, when there is no good company to be had or love or laughter. This foolish tyranny of hours and customs! To be obliged to sleep when you don't wish to and wake when you don't wish to. I live for two

or three days at a stretch. Then I'm ready to sleep two days until I'm glad to live again."

"You don't belong to the proletariat, you know," remarked Flora.

"The proletariat!" And paying no attention to their departure or farewells, he turned to Miss Tucker and murdered her delicious somnolescence with terrible tales which she mistook for nightmares bred of champagne and lobster salad.

CHAPTER VII

One morning soon after Christmas Smith walked into Porter's office in Pemberton Square. The labour leader had learned all he cared to about the candidate from outside sources and now was ready for a talk with the man himself.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith," said Porter, rising and shaking hands with his usual frank cordiality. "What can I do for you?"

"Well," answered the labour leader, as he seated himself. "I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Just so," was the cheerful rejoinder. "Ask away."

Smith asked, without a moment's hesitation. All his words came easily. "Do you want the Democratic nomination for governor?"

"Not badly enough to do any dirty work for it. Yes, I want it, if it comes my way."

"It's coming your way, I guess. And I can do a lot to help it on."

Porter's face darkened a trifle. Was there to be a bargain here?

The other did not leave the matter in doubt.

"Oh, I'm not looking for anything in it myself — not just now, at any rate. But before I go ahead, I want to be sure I'm following the right man. Now, Mr. Porter, I'm a Democrat."

Porter nodded. "So am I."

"I believe in Democratic principles, if any man knows what they are, and I believe, if you're going to do anything in politics, you've got to do it by sticking to one of the old parties. Ain't that right?"

"Quite right. At least it's my idea, too."

"But," went on Smith, "I'm a labouring man and a labour man. All the votes I can swing are labour votes, and before we throw them, I and my crowd, we want to know how our candidate is going to act towards labour. We don't want to put in a governor that's goin' to face round and be hand and glove with the swells and turn down everything that labour's been working for. Now, how do you stand?"

Porter's speech was as ready as his questioner's and the look that went with it was as frank as the speech. "Your question is too general, Mr. Smith. I could tell you I'm the friend of labour, as so many candidates do, with big, empty words, when they're looking for support; then when they've got elected, the vetoes come pretty thickly, as you know. I might just as well say, now and here, that I should probably veto some measures that your friends would shout for. Nevertheless, I am

the friend of labour. I want every man to have a free and fair chance. I don't believe he gets it in a good many ways as things are now. I think your unions rob him of it sometimes. More often I think he's robbed of it by laws that are passed unjustly, dishonestly, in favour of corporations that have money to buy the legislature. Now it's right here that I come in. There's a great deal of talk about reforming the legislatures and all that, about sending better men. It isn't the men, Mr. Smith, it's the system that's wrong. We make the men what they are. We give them every inducement to be corrupt and no inducement to be anything else. See how it's done. We send three hundred men up to that legislature every year. Half of them have never been there before. Three-quarters of them know nothing about government or administration. Not one man of them is there to represent the state as a whole, to see that the interests of one part are adjusted to those of another, to see that the general finances are managed with care, economy, and decency. Not one man has any natural position of leadership, any right to suggest a course of action to the others, or to control action on their part. Every man is interested in his own little constituency, to get something for that, something that will make him popular and secure his political advancement. How is he to get that something? There

is only one possible way: by giving his vote to a lot of other men who each want similar somethings and getting theirs in exchange. And since a bargain is a bargain, when a man has got the habit of exchanging his vote for another vote, the next thing to do is to exchange it for a hundred dollars or for five dollars. And since all these petty concerns are of no interest to the assembly as a whole, it cannot debate them as a whole. It appoints a committee for this, a committee for that. Everything must go to its proper committee. The committee hears, the committee decides, the committee reports, the legislature acts as the committee tells it to. There is no openness, no free discussion, no publicity. Fix the committee. There you are. This is a long lecture, Mr. Smith; but you wanted to know where I stand."

Smith was listening, with his brows contracted, his gray eyes fixed on the lecturer. "Go on," he said. "You're all right so far. But what do you propose to do about it?"

"That's just the point. I want to drag everything into the open air, shake the dust and moths out and let in the sunshine of publicity. I want important measures debated squarely and freely in open session, with the most wide-awake reporters in the country following every man's speech and every man's action and the public waiting to snatch it hot

from the reporters. That's the one thing my campaign, if I have one, will try to bring about."

Smith nodded, still with the thoughtful expression in his eyes. "That's what we all want to bring about; — but how?"

"I'll tell you. Let the governor govern. Now he's a figurehead — no more. You drop a nickel in the slot and get a speech appropriate to the occasion, according to whether it's a memorial service or a cattle show. The veto? To be sure, the veto. What would you think of the general of an army who had no power except to veto the proceedings of a council of war? Of the superintendent of a factory or the president of a railroad, with a veto? No, I say let the governor govern and then let the legislature do its natural duty of watching and checking the governor's government and holding him to a due responsibility. Let him be absolutely free to appoint a cabinet of subordinates who shall be secretaries of state, of the treasury, of education, of what not. Let those secretaries have regular seats in the legislative body. Let at least the greater part of proposed legislation be introduced subject to their approval. Let them lead the debates for it against the natural united opposition of the other party, which will watch every chance to criticize the administration both in its legislative and in its executive functions. Do this and you will have a search light of public interest thrown

upon your state government which will banish corruption — or if that is impossible, with human nature as it is, will at least reduce it to something very different from what we find now. That is my programme, Mr. Smith, the one thing I'm working for. I believe it will help labour. I know it will help labour so far as labour is honestly in pursuit of justice. I believe it offers the best possible means of solving all the great and difficult problems in regard to corporations, trusts, monopolies. First get honest government. Then these questions can be discussed fairly and settled, so far as they can ever be settled. Until you get honest government — not merely for a day through some passing outburst of reform — but honest government as a system, you can't settle anything."

The speaker paused; then, as Smith made no answer and appeared absorbed in thought, went on again: "Perhaps it seems to you not a very pretty thing for me to advocate increasing the governor's power and then ask to be governor. But that's just why I do it. I don't care to be a walking slot machine. But give the governor something to do and something to be — with the strictest responsibility, mind you, to a legislature which is all the keener to criticize because it has no mission to act — and you'll see the biggest men in the country anxious to take governorships, men whose only interest now is to ruin government by buying it up for their own purposes. Really big men don't want

money. They want action and distinction. This idea of mine will give them a chance for enough of it to satisfy any man. Now, Mr. Smith, I've told you where I stand."

This time Smith's face was clear and he answered promptly. "I'm with you," he said. "This looks to me like a big thing. I've heard about it before, but I've never had a square chance to get at the facts. Of course I don't understand it all yet. I'll have to think it over a lot and ask more questions by and by. But I like you. Some people don't believe in ideas in politics. That kind of people are mostly afraid of ideas because they don't know anything about 'em. I believe in 'em — when there's a man behind 'em — and I've seen you put through that factory bill last spring. Mr. Porter, you're my candidate for governor on the Democratic ticket. I've got a good many friends and you've got a good many friends and I believe you'll be elected. At any rate, I'm with you for the fight."

The two men looked in each other's eyes with absolute sincerity and shook hands warmly.

Then Smith asked a few questions as to the details of Porter's programme, raising some of the objections that naturally occurred in regard to it. The answers that he received seemed to satisfy him in every respect.

Some points as to the practical workings of the campaign also came up.

"Heath will be against you, I suppose?"

Smith said. He, like almost every one, had heard of the rivalry between the two men in other matters.

"I suppose so," agreed Porter. "A strong man."

"No," was the decided answer, "a smart man, but cares for nothing but Heath. He's only strong because of Wood and the party behind him."

"There's just one way to beat him, Mr. Smith, and that's by getting hold of the people."

"You're right there, and an honest man, with a platform like yours, can get the people every time. I'm more anxious about the nomination than about the election. Hinckley's a man you never know where to find."

"And Tom Burke?" Porter asked.

"Oh, Tom Burke" — Smith laughed and didn't finish his sentence.

"Well," said Porter, "I've got to go out now. Come to my rooms some evening and have a long talk. Telephone up so you'll be sure to find me. Think over all your objections in the meantime and I'll do my best to meet them."

"I will," Smith answered. And as they again shook hands at parting, he added: "Whether we win or not, Mr. Porter, I'm on your side. You can count on me. And we will win."

Late that afternoon Porter dropped into the Idlers' Club, in the hope of finding a man with

whom he had business to transact. He did not find the man he wanted; but he found Flitters instead; or rather, Flitters found him.

"Hello, Porter," exclaimed that volatile personage. "Sit down and talk to a fellow."

"Can't," said Porter, "busy."

"Nonsense, you're not busy. What kind of a life is that to live? Sit down. I've something to say to you."

"I can't imagine —" Porter objected; but he sat down and allowed a whiskey and soda to be called for. He even accepted a cigar. When he had lighted it, he turned to his companion inquiringly. "Well?" he said.

"Well," was the petulant reply. "I sha'n't talk till I'm ready, old man. No 'business transacted while you wait' for me."

"All right. Take your time — and mine."

When the whiskey had come, Flitters at last found his tongue. "I want to take you to my cousin's some evening," he said.

"Your cousin's? Who is he? What should I do there?"

"Not he, she."

"Oh, she."

"And you'd do what every one else does. Sing, laugh, make verses, eat, drink, and be merry."

Porter looked at his companion as if not understanding. "You've got the wrong man," he objected. "I can't sing nor make verses."

"Nor laugh nor be merry, I suppose — nor

eat and drink in any way to profit by it. But you might learn."

"You'll excuse me," suggested Porter, sipping his whiskey with a certain relish, in spite of his companion's innuendo, "you'll excuse me, but why this extraordinary outburst of charity on your part?"

"To tell the truth, my cousin wants to see you."

"Oh!" Then, after a moment of reflection, Porter added, "Who is she?"

"Viola Buckingham. She's rich and handsome and idle and talks well and has a mob of pretty girls about her. You've heard of her perhaps?"

Porter made no reply. He was thinking of Margaret Ferguson. He did think of her every hour of the day. She was rich and handsome and idle. If he would give up the ambitions and ideals of years, he might have her for his own. Sometimes he was almost ready to do so. But he would much prefer to have her and the ideals, too. Meantime there was no room in his life for other women, however rich and handsome.

"I asked if you'd heard of her," reiterated Flitters, with mild insistence.

"Yes, I've heard of her; but I don't think that sort of thing is in my line. I'm neither rich nor handsome nor idle, you know."

"I understand that perfectly; but it's good for you to come in contact with those who are.

Come, you'll go with me some evening, won't you?"

"I doubt it," was the indifferent answer.

"Oh, yes, you will."

Then they left the club together, Flitters preaching his favourite doctrine of the golden moment. "You never live, Porter, you're always going to live. After all, past and future are nothing. The present is absolutely within our power, if we choose to make it so. Here is the world, overflowing with unspeakable joy and beauty and merriment, and persons like you pass by with head in the air, snuffing after something unattainable in the far distance. The moment, the present moment, is a golden cup, and if we choose, we may fill it from the exhaustless fountain of eternity. Ages of care, generations of restless fret have robbed most of us of our birthrights. I am at least glad that my eyes are open to the splendour of mine."

CHAPTER VIII

Porter had been invited to the Fergusons on the last night of the year, just a quiet dinner of three. While they were at table Mr. Ferguson had carried most of the conversation, keeping it on general topics, but contriving to intersperse what seemed to him very clever hints on the necessity of common sense and practical views, if a man wanted to get ahead in life.

After dinner they were all together for a time in the reception-room, and Ferguson began his attack fairly and directly.

"Mat," he said, "I hope you've thought better of your political schemes."

"I've thought of them a great deal," was the quiet answer. "As to better, I don't know."

"Depend upon it, you're making a mistake, if you stick to them. Now just look at it seriously, Mat, for a moment. What chance has a Democrat in this state? I don't say but a man mightn't get elected by personal popularity or money. But supposing he does. Everybody's against him. He's got no official support, no chance to do anything or get ahead. I'm not arguing for Republican principles or against them. But when one party has things

all its own way in a state, there's no use in a man's tying himself up with the other. Don't you think I'm right?"

"There are some advantages about belonging to the weaker party," Porter answered. "If you go in with the stronger party and win as a matter of course, you get no credit individually. You must follow the old lines or get out. If you head the weaker party and win, you have it all your own way."

"Ah, yes," answered the paternal adviser. "If you win — a gambler's chance. That sort of thing is all very well for a man who has made his pile and can afford to amuse himself. You haven't made your pile yet, I think?"

"No," was the cheerful reply, "no pile."

"Exactly. You're a young man. You can do better at forty-five than you can at thirty-five. Wait awhile. Do as I told you the other day. I've thought it over a good deal. We want just such a man as you are in the Over-State Electric law department. Come right in with us at five thousand dollars a year to begin with. In two or three years you'll be making five times that. Don't stand in your own light, Mat. It's your good I'm thinking of. And the chance I'm offering you doesn't come in every man's way."

Porter paused before he answered and when he did answer it was with much seriousness. "I appreciate your kindness, Mr. Ferguson. I must seem like a fool to refuse it. You spoke

of a gambler's chance. I suppose there is a little of the gambler's spirit in me. Yet I like to think there is something else also."

"Of course, of course," said Ferguson, with some irritation. "But don't answer me now, Mat. The thing will keep for awhile. Think it over." He rose, as he spoke. "I'll leave Margaret to persuade you. She knows how better than I."

Porter rose also, shook hands, and again expressed his sense of Ferguson's kindness. "I shall not forget it, whatever happens," he said.

Then Margaret was left alone with her lover. Her talk with Heath in the same room, such a little time ago, was vividly present to her mind. So many circumstances were the same. But the men were so different.

"Well?" she began at length. "You refuse my father's offer."

Instead of answering her directly, he burst forth all at once with the tide of hopes, and doubts, and passions, which had tormented him since he had seen her last. "Margaret," he cried, "Margaret, I don't think you can know what all this means to me. You put it plainly enough, clearly enough, when we talked together before. 'Either give up politics,' you said, 'or give up me.' But surely you can't know what it means. For ten years I've cherished the idea — call it a dream, if you like. I've watched the condition of public affairs in Massachusetts — in every state. I've heard the

cry of corruption on all sides. I've seen the swell of contending passions — now a strong man throwing himself into the breach in desperate effort at reform, now a cynic coming along and saying that reform is impossible and that popular government is an absurd failure. I've watched — and I've said to myself, there's only one way and I know that way. It may not succeed, but it's the only thing in sight that can. It ought to be tried and I'm the one to try it. I don't say it's all patriotism. I'm ambitious. Of course I'm ambitious. I want to try the scheme myself — and be governor myself. And then, Margaret, when I've thought of these things, you've always been the first figure in the picture. We've grown up together. I've loved no woman but you. I've known no woman but you. I've so little to give you now. But I hope, yes, Margaret, I believe, that the time will come when I shall have as much to give you as a man can give. I believe in my idea absolutely, yes, absolutely. And everything it brings me I am ready to lay down at your feet. — Now you come and ask me to give it up. Margaret!"

She had heard him out in silence, leaning back in the great chair, her head resting on her hand, her face turned away from him. Even when he had ceased speaking and the passion of his last appeal was ringing in her ears, she said nothing for a long time, but gazed motionless at the smouldering fire in front of her.

But at last she answered and her voice was cold and quiet. "It's a gambler's chance, as papa says, and you go at it like a gambler, staking your all on this one wild throw. I don't know much about your idea. I never trouble myself about politics. But I do know that the world is full of cranks who think they've got a secret that will make everything right, who go around saying that if only they had their way there would be no trouble and no corruption. Why, Mat, haven't you seen plenty of that, don't you know them?"

"You think I'm one of them?" he asked hoarsely, leaning forward in his chair, his face buried in his hands.

There was a shade more softness in her tone, as she replied. "No, I don't think you're one of them yet. But you will be, if you go on. And if my husband was a man like that, I'd shoot him. Mat," she continued, and her voice was softer still, soft and winning with the old subtle charm that had held him to her for so many years, in spite of clearer thought and better judgment, "Mat, you say you love me. I love you. I've never said that to any man before — believe it or not, as you like. As you say, we've grown up together, and there's something about you — you're better than I am, and I love you for it."

She drew her chair nearer his and laid her hand on his shoulder. As she did it, a shiver

ran through his whole frame; but he did not change his position.

"And I've come to the marrying point, too," she said. "I've made up my mind to marry now — you or some one else. There'll be no withered old maidhood for me. But papa has told me flatly he will never approve of my marrying you, unless you give up politics for the present. I shouldn't care for his telling — only I don't approve of it myself. Mat" — she drew nearer still and slipped her arm about his neck — "Give up these crazy dreams and schemes, for they are crazy. Come down to common sense and common life. Take the world as other people take it — and take me."

It was his turn now to pause before answering, and he stayed there silent, his face buried in his hands, her arm about his neck. To debate, to decide, to think even, in that rush and tumult of his blood was well-nigh impossible. Yet not for an instant did he really imagine that he might yield, might forget his high ideals or throw aside his golden hope. Nay, in that moment of close, physical contact he seemed to feel more of the body and less of the spirit in her hold upon him than he had ever known before. As he said, he had grown up with her, the thought of her, the hope of her was intertwined with the deepest fibres of his loyal being. But she had never understood him. What she had said to-night showed that more clearly than ever. A crank, she had called him, a crank!

Crazy dreams! He did not care for words, but could there be any real communion between him and her?

Then she drew her arm away, and her chair. And he sat up straight, with an enormous effort, and the tumult of his spirit showed in the strangeness of his voice. "Margaret, I can't do it."

"Very well," she answered, absolutely calm and cold. "Good-bye."

"Margaret," he began; but the words died on his lips. Apparently she was not listening, not even looking at him.

He rose in silence and left the room, and she let him go without another word.

For the next few days Miss Ferguson was not an agreeable companion to those who were obliged to come in contact with her. Her father, soon inferring that she had not been successful in persuading Porter, attempted to sympathize — or congratulate — he was not quite sure which. But she snubbed him sharply. "Don't bother me," she said. "Dudley Heath! Is he a man?" Indeed, whenever she thought of Heath, tried to fix her mind on his cleverness, his social gifts, his practical sense, she found the passionate appeal of her other lover ringing in her ears and at the sound of it all Heath's cheap and superficial charms and graces withered into nothing.

Nevertheless, her resolution did not really waver, and the next time Heath came to see

her, she went down to him without a doubt as to the result of the interview.

When they were comfortably seated in the same proximity as on a previous occasion, Heath began his attack.

"Well," he said, "I don't say this is the last time I shall come to make love to you; but I hope so."

No answer.

"Is it?" he continued.

"Really, I don't know," she replied. "I should be tempted to prolong the process, if I thought practice would improve you."

He shook his head. "It couldn't. Love like mine, which wells right out of the heart, is born perfect and can't be improved upon."

He tried to take her hand, but she drew it away impatiently. "It's a pity that such an ideal affection should be wasted on me," she said, "because, to tell the truth, I don't love you at all."

The ardent lover received this thrust with entire equanimity. "Well, to meet you on your own ground, I may as well say that I don't love you, either. And between us, Margaret, being what we are, don't you think this nonsense might as well be dropped? Love is for children, a puling, feeble, green-sick sort of business. At the very best there's nothing behind it but deception and disappointment. You dress up an ideal out of your own imagination and kneel down and pray to it. One

fine day the glory fades and you see it as it is — just common, mean, selfish, worthless human nature."

"You seem to speak from elaborate experience," she remarked, in the unimpassioned, far-away tone, in which she had carried on the conversation hitherto.

"No, I assure you, not. I've read all about it in books. It is mentioned in a few, as you may be aware."

If she was aware, she made no sign, sitting quiet, her long lids drooping, as if she were thinking of something quite different from Dudley Heath and his book-learned love-lore.

But he was not discouraged. "Margaret," he went on, "if we marry, let us do it with our eyes open and all our common sense about us. If we do, everything will go right. We don't either of us want the nonsense of love; that is, we both know that, if it has a certain charm, it is nothing but wandering moonshine in the end. What we want is money, success, to have a good time and do something in the world. Life is a poor thing, just tolerable when you get the best of it. We have a fair chance of getting the best of it together."

She had not moved nor seemed to listen to him at all. Now she turned slowly, leaned both hands on the arm of her chair and looked at him. "Dudley," she said, "a week ago to-night Mat Porter sat in that chair and talked — so differently from the way you talk. He

made love to me, don't you know, real love. It may be wandering moonshine, but it was sweet."

"Well, perhaps Porter can out-talk me in that line, though I've had some compliments."

"But can he outdo you every other way, that's the question."

"Exactly, that's the question. But if you ask me, frankly, I don't think he can."

"I don't think so, either," she said reflectively. Then firing up again at the recollection of that other night, she went on, with hungry eagerness: "But, Dudley, he does seem like a bigger man than you."

"I'm going to be governor," was the cool interruption.

"He's so much handsomer than you. His mouth is so strong, his eyes so clear, he stands up so firm and vigorous."

"I'm going to be governor."

"He's so brave, too, not ready to truckle — like you, and time-serve — like you, and fawn and flatter where he's only anxious to bite."

"I'm going to be governor."

"And he's honest and honourable, not a cynic, always looking for low, mean motives. Perhaps you think I'm more of a cynic than you. So I am — and lower — and meaner. I could never live with him — nor he with me. All the same, I appreciate that he is good and noble and you — are not."

"I'm going to be governor."

"I know it. And I dare say you're good enough for me. Anyway, I'll marry you."

Even Heath jumped a little at this sudden conclusion of her eulogy of his rival. Then, anxious to signify his ecstasy in an appropriate form, he would have clasped her to his heart. But she pushed him away. "Bother," she said. "That's all wandering moonshine. I've said I'd marry you and I will. I won't go back on it. I'll swear it by Mammon, if you like, and if that's the one to swear by. But go away now and let me alone."

He went.

CHAPTER IX

Porter had made his choice and he never for a moment felt that he could have made it otherwise; but the struggle had been a hard one. As he thought things over, in the revealing light of that last interview, it seemed clear that he and Margaret could never have been happy together: she did not understand him, she did not trust him, to put it simply, she did not love him, at any rate, not as he loved her and would have wished to be loved. Yet, reason as he might, the thought of her was bound up with all his memories, with all his hopes, with the whole web and tissue of his life. Her eyes, her voice, that bloomy softness of her cheek — was he never to kiss it, never, never? And there came over him a sudden wave of wild regret that he never had kissed it. In all the years of his devotion to her, though she had, of course, known his love and others had known it, he had always treated her, always thought of her, with the most delicate respect. Now that she had herself done what she could to shatter the god of his idolatry, there rushed upon him a memory of vague rumours hinting that others had not always been so delicate as he, that

others had kissed that bloomy softness till they were weary and she had not rebuked them. He had never believed it before; but now — Was that what he should have done? Was she a woman to be taken by storm and not by slow siege and soft approaches? And in the tumult of regret and humiliation he was half-minded to return to her, to take her in his arms and kiss her blindly again and again and again, then cast her from him for ever, making her understand that the blight of rejection had really fallen not upon him, but upon her.

The haunting torment of these thoughts made him go through the next week as if in a dream. The necessary routine of business seemed almost intolerable and for the time even the vision of political success brought no charm, no consolation. What would success be now that he had no one to share it with him?

Saturday he went up to Foxbridge to spend Sunday with his sister and there he found a little relief. Saturday evening he had a long talk with his friend Marston, from whom Porter had originally derived his political ideas. The two agreed that the time for action had come, and that if a Democratic campaign, organized according to their views, did not succeed now, it must at least lead to overwhelming success a little later on. This was some comfort.

Then Sunday Porter told the whole story to his sister. Miss Porter was not a person of

many words. She was tall, dark, and quiet, with dark eyes, an oval, olive face, and snow white hair. She was much older than her brother and had brought him up from boyhood, and he and his interests were all her world. She had never liked Margaret Ferguson, nor hoped for the match; but she had never attempted to interfere with it, doubting the usefulness of such attempts. Now everything had turned out just as she had wished. Nevertheless, she sympathized with her brother's suffering at the moment.

"You were wiser than I, Clara," he said. "You disbelieved in it from the beginning."

"I am no judge of such matters," was the placid answer. "Besides, there may have been a little jealousy in my feeling."

"Nonsense! You jealous!"

"Every woman is jealous of what she loves, I fancy. And every man, too, for that matter."

"Well, it's all over now," he continued, after a long silence. "But it hurts."

"Life hurts. It it weren't for the thought of something higher, I don't know how we should endure it. But, after all, you have everything before you."

"Oh, yes, I know it. Just now it seems as if everything were behind. Clara, what is the use, even if I succeed, all alone, no wife, no children — just solitude to the very, very end?"

She was a woman of such grave discretion that she did not even hint that she would share

his solitude and be to him instead of wife and children, did not remind him that she had only solitude before her — no wife, no children — and no success. Nay, she did not even suggest the possibility of another love, another wife, and children who might have a better inheritance than Margaret Ferguson's. She talked more simply and more practically, advised leaving the distant future to adjust its own affairs, discussed immediate prospects, political schemes, political friends, in a tone that of itself carried great balmy depths of quiet sympathy. And Porter, returning to town next day, found life more bearable by many degrees.

Tuesday morning Flitters telephoned and urged Porter to go to Viola's with him that evening. Porter's first instinct was to refuse. Men he must see; but, at least, women — Then common sense protested. A new atmosphere was just what he required, contact with different people, with different interests. He need never go again if he did not wish; but just now it would be better than the long reflecting hours in his solitary rooms. "Very well," he answered. "I'll go."

So, about half-past eight, the two arrived at Viola's. They found the whole company assembled. As they slipped in quietly, Flora was singing, with her back turned to them, and they stood by the door till she had finished. This gave Viola a few moments to examine her guest's appearance and she was pleased. There

was something dignified in his simple, frank bearing, something manly and commanding in his look, which made her feel that she should not regret the step she had taken.

When Flora finished, Flitters came forward and performed the necessary introduction. "Viola, here is a gentleman to whom life is all dead earnest. I told him that this was the place to get a Ph. D. — doctor of folly — and that earnestness could not live long in this atmosphere. Porter, only one subject of talk is absolutely forbidden — politics. I hope it won't result in total dumbness on your part."

But Viola interposed, with her usual tranquil grace. "I need not tell you, Mr. Porter, that this gentleman has taken all the possible degrees — and some impossible — in the science he alludes to. The rest of us understand what seriousness is — and can practise it on occasion — sometimes find it even a little difficult to shake off. To George it has the peculiar terrors which always accompany the unknown."

Porter hastened to disclaim, as far as possible, the attribution of undue solemnity, but Flitters interrupted. "You're so far gone in the disease that you don't even know the symptoms. And to tell the truth, Viola herself is by no means what she should be. But there are some of us here" — he looked round at the company — "who know better what life is and how to make the most of it."

Without more words, he went to the piano

and played a rollicking air which could not be accused of unnecessary seriousness. And all the company, except Viola, joined with utter abandon in the chorus, while Porter, sitting quietly beside his hostess, thought that if he was seeking something different from the solitude of his own chambers, he had certainly found it.

Then Laura read some verses in the fashion of a Chaucerian prologue, full of sharp hits on every member of the company, and particularly characterizing Flitters as:

> "A clown three centuries behind his day,
> Who thinks the world a place for him to play.
> Supreme in wit, he spends his wit on nothing
> But booming useful articles of clothing.
> From morn to night he spins an idle jest
> And thinks the wise should move at his behest,
> Wiser than they, so he himself declares;
> For he finds laughter, where the wise find cares."

Other readings followed and other songs; and Porter, unaccustomed as the tone of things was to him, found himself wonderfully at ease. This was, of course, largely owing to Viola's tact. She said a quiet word to him about each of the company, about Flora's singing, Grace's painting, Laura's literature. She laughed at Flitters's nonsense and half-apologized for it, and all the time, perhaps without intending it, she gave Porter to understand that she was not quite at home with these idlers and laughers any more than he was, that life meant something more to her, or might mean more, than a jest,

or even a song. She did not say this in so many words, made no such approach to sudden intimacy. That was not her way. Probably Porter, keen as he was at analysis, would not even have formulated it for himself. Yet he realized, in some vague fashion, that she was making him feel at home.

Up-stairs, in the supper-room, Flitters took charge of the newcomer, led him from group to group and gave him a characteristic introduction to each one. "Miss Buckingham, my cousin, — charming girl, — Grace her name, grace her nature — paints exquisite things, not much truth, but feeling. Miss Ruth Nelson — has one more dimple than Grace, but a much more uncertain temper — you have to make love to her with extreme caution, which rather enhances the piquancy; sculpts occasionally. Mr. Eugene McCarthy — plays the violin like Orpheus, so that even politicians and Standard Oil magnates dance after him — a *virtuoso,* I'm sure, though why a great musician should be called a *virtuoso* I have never been able to make out, a kind of *lucus e non lucendo,* I suppose. He and I are doing a comic opera together. Miss Laura Wells — I say nothing about her, because you've heard her describe me. Miss Flora Chantrey — she appears commonplace enough, but she's divine to listen to, when she sings — when she talks, there's nothing divine about her; in fact, I sometimes think — Miss Constance Weber, I don't know her

much better than you do as yet, but she's attractive to look at, isn't she?"

After supper there was more music. McCarthy was urgently solicited to play, but again refused. "I can't," he said. "I can't. I don't feel like it. So where's the use of trying?"

"Oh, Mr. Flitters," began Constance.

"Mr. Flitters!" groaned the person addressed. "A pair of Hanks's on the shoulders of a Greek god!"

"Well, Flitters then. You should have heard him play last week. It was heavenly."

"I dare say. He plays to me, when we are making the opera. It's heavenly, of course; but it gets awfully in the way of my ideas."

Meantime Porter was looking over Viola's latest photographs with Ruth and Flora.

"Mr. Porter," Flora urged, "do talk politics to us."

"I thought that was forbidden," he answered, smiling.

"Nonsense," Ruth chimed in. "He's busy over there with Constance. Besides, we're a free people, after all. I think politics must be so fascinating."

"They are — to persons who don't know anything about them. Excuse the impertinence."

"I don't pretend to know anything about them," Ruth went on. "And I'm not for woman's rights, of course, or that sort of nonsense. But it must be such fun."

"Ruth would be enthusiastic, if she were

talking to an undertaker," interrupted Flora. "Excuse my impertinence this time, Mr. Porter. I agree with her about politics. It must be fun to abuse people right and left and call them thieves and liars for doing just what you are doing yourself."

"Ah, but one doesn't lie and steal one's self," Porter objected, not too seriously.

"No, no, of course not. It's only the others."

At this point Viola came up.

"Mr. Porter's talking politics to us," said Ruth. "Isn't that nice?"

"No," remonstrated Porter, with much decision, "I was only listening."

"I can well believe it," was Viola's sympathetic answer.

"Come," Flora cried, very indignantly, "I can't stand that. Let's go where we're appreciated."

She and Ruth went and Viola and Porter were left once more by themselves.

"I have a very pleasant evening to thank you for," he remarked, after a moment's quiet observance of what was going on in the other part of the room.

"I am glad. You must come again — and often," was her simple answer. "It may seem a rather frivolous world here; but it's less so than it seems. In fact, almost every one has a serious purpose, of a kind — except myself — and George."

"I imagine you have a serious purpose — if

it were known." He turned and looked at her searchingly, at the strong, sweet lines of her face and her earnest eyes.

She shook her head. "No, I never have had one yet."

"Then it must be that your make-up is so very serious that you've never yet found anything serious enough for it."

She did not answer for a moment. "That sounds appalling, doesn't it? And life overflowing with such serious matter, too."

Here Flitters pounced upon them. "You two cannot stay together," he cried. "You spoil all the mirth of the good company. Your long, earnest faces are like two dull black clouds looming up on our sunshine. We're going to act impromptu charades now, of which the one chief object is to make you both perfectly ridiculous. Come! Come! Come!"

They came and made themselves ridiculous, with lamblike humility and considerable success, so that the company in general were edified and even Flitters condescended to approve.

"Haven't you enjoyed yourself?" he asked, as he left Porter at the door of his chambers.

"I have," was the evidently genuine answer.

"I thought so. But it must be something so unusual you hardly know it, when it comes. Try it again soon. It'll make you a better man and a better governor."

CHAPTER X

MARGARET had been receiving congratulations and cups and saucers for several weeks, when Viola decided to call upon her. The two had been together on the Nile long enough to be fairly intimate and to dislike each other as thoroughly as one does dislike an uncongenial travelling companion. Since then they had exchanged an occasional call and now Viola was somewhat anxious to see the woman who had accepted her cousin Dudley — and refused Matthew Porter.

When Viola first arrived, there were other callers and the talk was general. "Miss Buckingham and I have faced the Bedouins together," said Margaret, "and fought side by side against the horrid extortioners of backshish."

"And climbed the pyramids together," put in Viola, "or been dragged up them by a horde of shrieking savages."

"So you see we are old friends," the hostess continued.

"And soon to be new relations," was Miss Buckingham's final comment.

After the two were left alone, the conversa-

tion became more intimate. "To be sure, you are Dudley's cousin, aren't you?" Margaret began.

"*Si peu,*" protested Viola. Then she added: "Of course, I've come to congratulate you, with all my heart."

Margaret was watching her visitor closely, though the long, drooped eyelashes somewhat veiled the inspection. Word had come, in a roundabout way, to the Fergusons, of Porter's latest social move, and there seemed to be something there which it would be interesting to investigate, when the right moment should arrive.

"So good of you," she murmured. "You probably know as well as any one whether there is any cause."

If she thought to disturb Viola by such attacks as this, she did not understand her. "If you mean as to Dudley, he will make his way in the world," was the imperturbable answer.

"Will he make mine?"

"That depends upon whether yours is his."

"You think he's incurably selfish, don't you?" Margaret spoke with exquisite simplicity, as if the idea were rather novel.

"Don't you?" answered Viola, with equal simplicity, but of a very different kind.

Margaret lifted her eyebrows in an unpleasant way quite usual with her. "A man is so apt to be one thing to his own family and another thing to — to strangers."

"Ah!" was the calm response. "I suppose as a stranger you find him so trying that you are anxious to get into the other relation."

The talk lapsed momentarily. "Perhaps it is a mistake to marry in any case," Margaret suggested at length.

"Really, I'm not in a position to say, though I incline to that view, unless one is of a very domestic temperament. I shall be glad to hear your opinion about it later."

"Later, yes — but how about too late?" was the thoughtful comment. "You see, the trouble is," she went on, leaning her head on her hand and looking out at the pale blue February sky, "the trouble is, one has got to be either married or not married."

"It does seem so," agreed her visitor.

"If you're married, you're a slave, vexed, thwarted, and tormented at every turn, no life of your own, no independence. But if you're not married, you're nobody, a maiden aunt, a utility, a withered excrescence, you cumber the earth, unless you are ready to run at everybody's beck and call. When one begins to get a clear view of a certain age, one takes these things in. You must have done so often."

"Well," answered Viola, with her usual tranquillity, "there's no doubt about the age in my case; but I don't feel the state of things to be quite so desperate. You appear to me to look at it always from the point of view of other people. An unmarried woman may seem a

withered excrescence to others — some others — and some unmarried women; — but I don't see why she should be so to herself. I have thought that if she chose, she might be full of sunshine and ripe sweetness and might radiate a good deal of the same to those about her."

Margaret lifted her eyebrows again in that ugly, sarcastic way she had. "You're an optimist, aren't you? Like Mat Porter."

"I don't know about Mr. Porter. And I've never thought myself much of an optimist. An optimist is a person who tries to make the best of what he feels to be a very bad bargain. That's why they're so tiresome. I believe in taking life as it is."

But Margaret was not interested in abstract views of life. She wanted the personal element. "I've understood that you do know about Mr. Porter," she said.

"Ah?" was the cool reply.

"Why, yes, who told me now? That he had been to your — your — what shall I call them — evenings?"

"Well, you might call them evenings — if you like. Why shouldn't Mr. Porter come to them?"

"No reason — none in the world. I suppose there's no reason why anybody shouldn't come to them. Only — "

"Only?" repeated Viola, but with no annoyance in her tone and very little curiosity.

"Only he seems out of place there. You

see, he's a man who knows nothing about the lighter side of things."

"I see."

Margaret went on, without noticing the interruption. "He has been brought up and lived most of his life in a small country town and has come very little in contact with the social world. He has singular ideas of his own about politics and an almost stupid confidence in his own ideas. In fact, he is conceited, there's no getting round it. Now, you know, conceited people always take life too seriously and I fancied the — the gaiety of your companies wouldn't suit him."

"You have heard that my companies are — gay, have you? I think you've never attended them yourself."

"Yes, I've heard so."

"Well," continued Viola, with much apparent thoughtfulness, "I'll bear what you say in mind and when he is present, we will endeavour not to be too — gay."

"I suppose the truth is," Margaret added, with even greater thoughtfulness, "the poor fellow needs diversion. His life hasn't been all gaiety lately, and probably he is glad to get into an atmosphere which, for a time at least, may drive away unpleasant thoughts. You know how it is, when things haven't gone just as they should with one. I'm sure Mat's friends ought to be very grateful to you."

Viola reflected more deeply still. "There's something in what you suggest," she said.

"But to tell you the truth, I haven't noticed that Mr. Porter seemed especially cast down. On the contrary, he gave me the impression of being a man who had put some rather trying things behind him and was looking forward to a great many noble and splendid things."

"Ah, yes, that's his conceit," interrupted Margaret sharply.

"Perhaps; but he doesn't give me the impression of conceit, only of self-confidence and a serene grasp of his own future. But you know him better than I."

"On the contrary, you show a faculty of positive divination. Do you generally read people so successfully — or only those you are interested in?"

"I can read some people — a little," answered Viola, with much calm.

Then other callers were announced and the *tête-à-tête* was at an end.

CHAPTER XI

Although Porter fully expected Margaret's engagement to Heath, the definite announcement of it at first brought back all his love and all his suffering. For a day or two he went about his work mechanically, having only one thing really present in his thoughts. Then he pulled himself together, wrote Margaret a brief, frank, affectionate note of congratulation, and tried to forget her in his political interests, which were beginning to assume a more definite form.

One or two articles referring in a general way to his candidacy had already appeared in both Republican and Democratic papers. The Republicans were civil, but contemptuous: it was natural that Democratic candidates should turn to outlandish ideas, for on any basis of ordinary common sense the chance of shaking Republican control was too evidently hopeless. The Democrats commended Porter's courage and praised his energy, but hinted that more was to be accomplished on regular party lines than by any fantastic and impracticable notions of reform.

Porter's association with Smith grew more

intimate every day. The two men understood each other. Both were frank, straightforward, in earnest; and Smith admired infinitely in his leader the union of tact with outspokenness, which was by no means so conspicuous in himself. The two went over their campaign plans in many long talks. Rooney must be captured somehow, Smith insisted. His influence in Boston was indispensable.

"How about Maloney?" asked Porter.

"Oh, the Boss won't interfere. That isn't his line. He'll have a talk with Rooney occasionally; but if we get Rooney, we've got Maloney."

"And Burke?" Porter asked again.

"Burke won't amount to much for us. But he's something against us. I'd like to get him. If he finds we're strong enough, he'll come over. He won't go for the nomination unless he's sure of getting it. Hinckley I believe you've got to fight. And he's the worst of the bunch."

"Then we'll fight Hinckley."

At the very start Porter made it clear to his lieutenant that he did not rely on winning the nomination or the election by machine activity. "I've no objection to that," he said, "if it isn't too crooked; but it's not my strong card."

"What is your strong card?"

"The people. When the time comes, I mean to speak right to them. If you've got a good thing, advertise it. I've got a good thing and I mean to advertise it."

"All right," agreed Smith. "Advertise away. It won't hurt."

But the labour leader had been in politics a good many years and was a little sceptical about novelties. "Better do what we can on the old lines, anyway. You're the man to capture the boys, if you get after them."

"Oh, I'll get after them," responded his chief heartily.

So the two frequented labour reunions and other gatherings both political and social. Porter spoke when necessary, always with good effect. He shook hands with the boys and the boys' wives and made them feel that he was glad to do it — as he was. So that one said to another, "He's the right sort, ain't he? No doubt about it."

All this came easy to him; for in spite of his quiet bringing up, he loved people, loved to watch them, and to study them, and to sympathize with them. There are men who take in, men who give out, men who do both, men who do neither. The last, nine-tenths of humanity, do not count. The man who gives out always, who is always overflowing with his own ideas and efforts and drenches others with them, may go far. But the man goes farthest who is no more eager to give out than he is to absorb. All really great men have been excellent listeners. And Porter was an excellent listener. He had never read Lord Chesterfield, but he instinctively followed the maxim of that wise person-

age: "Want of attention, which is really want of thought, is either folly or madness." He watched every man — and woman — he came in contact with, watched him and adapted himself to him, without deceit or hypocrisy, merely from sympathy and a desire to understand. This mental attitude is, I take it, the essence of tact; and tact, with strength, is magnetism; or if magnetism is anything more, Porter had it and used it to the best advantage. Even Smith was astonished at his friend's progress. "I believed in you from the start," he said, "but I thought you might be kind of hold-offish. You ain't a bit of it."

Rooney was not yet captured, however. Smith visited the saloon and tried his hand — not very successfully.

"Porter's a big man and he'll get there. You'd better catch on," he said.

"Is that so?" answered Rooney.

"I suppose you're not fool enough to believe in Hinckley or anything he'll do for you?" pursued the ardent proselyter.

Rooney winked a slow wink with red jocosity, the meaning of which obviously was that Mike Rooney would not trust any one to do for him but himself.

After much pointless sparring of this sort, Smith did, however, succeed in persuading the saloon-keeper to arrange an appointment for a visit to Porter's office.

"You'll have to make it worth his while some-

how, or you can't touch him. That's the long and the short of it. He's out for the dollars and nothing else," was the disgusted lieutenant's report to his chief.

"Well," was the smiling reply, "I'm not disposed to come down with the dollars; but we'll see what can be done."

In spite of his entire confidence in Smith, Porter thought it well to do some independent work on his own account, and he was not without other agents who could attend to business quickly, quietly, and thoroughly. As bookkeeper and general secretary in his office he had a certain Joseph Warren, a Foxbridge Irishman, whom Porter had known from boyhood and over whom he had always had considerable influence. This fellow had a natural gift for political management; and a practical training in the lower forms of law business had not in any way interfered with his inborn aptitudes. He was quiet, slow, subtle, cold, dignified in manner, not too much troubled with scruples; and his firm belief in his friend's future made him willing to give his time for a moderate immediate compensation. During the last month or two, Warren, at Porter's suggestion, had been making biographical investigations in regard to certain prominent Democrats, with some very interesting and surprising results. Therefore, when the time for Rooney's visit had arrived, Porter simply turned over his collec-

tion of cards as far as the letter R, refreshed his memory with the facts there recorded, and sat down to wait.

At or near the appointed hour Rooney entered Porter's office with his usual swagger, which seemed to fill the world — his world.

"Good morning, Mr. Rooney," said Porter, shaking hands. "Sit down."

Rooney sat down, with a moderately genial "good morning."

Porter proceeded at once to business. "Mr. Smith tells me you're a good man to talk politics with."

"Politics!" The mere word conveys nothing of the scorn that went with it. "What's politics? A business just like any other business, ain't it? That's the way I look at it."

"Well, you may be right; but you'll agree that there are mighty few businesses that require more careful handling."

Rooney had expected a sermon, not this; but he only grunted.

Porter continued. "Now I want you to understand, Mr. Rooney, that I'm in the fight to win. I've got a few ideas in my pocket that I believe in and that are going to help me along. I don't suppose I need trouble you about those. All you need to know is that I'm a fighter, that I'm going right down into the ring without gloves, and that I'm going to get there. Do you see?"

Rooney appeared slightly impressed, only slightly. If he saw, it was with a very perturbed and shadowy vision.

The attack was renewed in the same tone. "I suppose you want to have the Democrats win, Mr. Rooney?"

"Oh, yes, I want to have the Democrats win." He couldn't have expressed more ardour if his wife had suggested a visit from a few of her relations.

"And you'd rather have the Democrats win with me than lose without me? Wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, you're all right." But again the tone implied that it was all very far away from Michael Rooney.

Porter was not discouraged, however. "Well, then, if that's the way you feel, you might as well get down and dig; for as I told you before I'm going to be the Democratic candidate for governor of Massachusetts next fall and the Democratic party's going to win. And Rooney," — Porter was slower and more impressive now — "I'm not the kind to make promises and I won't go into office tied up in any way; but I'm not the man to forget my friends, either. If I'm elected, there'll be something for those that have helped me — provided they behave themselves and deserve it."

This sounded more like politics as Rooney understood them. But it wasn't practical. He always believed in the bird near by and now he

thought was the time to see what kind of a bird it was.

"Say, Mr. Porter," he began, with a curious whine in his tone, "this sounds pretty big. But I can't get my mind off somethin' nearer home."

"Ah?" said Porter, gravely curious, "something nearer home?"

"Yes. You see, it's this way. I'm kind of in trouble."

His tone demanded sympathy, but none was forthcoming; so he continued. "It takes a lot of money to run a family like mine." How large a family it was, he did not state; but Porter happened to be aware that it consisted of Mrs. Rooney, whose fat cheeks showed no signs of trouble, and one daughter who promised to be as fat as her mother and was already as cheerful. "I don't know how it is, but I'm always gettin' behind. There's a mortgage of a thousand dollars on the old home now."

Again he paused for a reply, — in vain.

"Of course money's nothin' to you, Mr. Porter. If you could fix it so as to lend me that thousand dollars, my mind would be easy, and I could go into this politics business and make things hustle."

He dropped his whine towards the end and squared himself a little, as if to say, "My cards are down."

There was a long pause. Porter's calm, cold face showed absolutely no response to either the whine or the defiance. Turning about to his

desk, he took some papers from a pigeon-hole and looked them over before he spoke. "There's a little matter here I should like your advice on, before we go any further, Mr. Rooney."

Rooney had hoped the papers might be blank checks. Now he regarded them with chilly incuriosity.

"Year before last," Porter went on, still in the same unbending tone, "there was a sharp contest for alderman in Ward Z."

The saloon-keeper pricked up his ears a little — ever so little.

"The Democratic candidate was O'Brien, a friend of Mr. Maloney's. He ought to have won. But near the end of the fight somebody wrote an anonymous letter to the Republican committee, giving a few facts that O'Brien did not care to have published. They were published. And O'Brien was sorry. I have a copy of that letter here. And I know the man that wrote it."

As Porter brought out this statement, short and sharp, like a succession of revolver shots, it was delightful to see Rooney's face change. All the indifference faded out of it and instead there came a mixture of anxiety and wrath.

"Now," continued Porter, "would you advise me to go right to Maloney with this or not? I think it would interest him. He knows that the man who wrote it hates O'Brien and would have been glad to down him if he had dared. When

he reads this letter — you see it says, 'Maloney would like to run everything, but he'll find he can't.'"

"It don't say nothin' of the kind," Rooney interrupted. "Maloney's name ain't in it at all."

"Why, now I look at it again, I see you're right. But how did you know?" As Porter said this, he smiled genially, for the first time during the interview.

Rooney appreciated the smile, but did not respond. He looked quite as angry as ever and a good deal more anxious. "You can't prove anything," he growled.

"Well," was the calm answer, "I'll try. I don't think Maloney'll ask very much."

Rooney's cheerfulness was not increased by this. "There's only one man in the world that knows," he said.

"Then I'm that man. But I'll tell you, there are three men at any rate. I don't know how many more. The truth is, my friend, in a little matter of this kind, there ought not to be any man that knows. But the trouble, it seems, was whiskey. Keep away from whiskey. There's a man you drink with occasionally. And he drinks occasionally with a friend of mine."

"Damn that Henessey! I'll wring his neck."

"That's between you and him, of course," replied Porter. "But from what I've heard of him, I hardly think you will." Then he changed his cold, sarcastic manner for the simple, direct

tone that was natural to him. "Now, Rooney, we've had this thing out. Let's forget it. I don't want to put you in a hole. You thought I was one of these college-bred fellows that talk a lot about politics, and when it comes down to business, they don't know how the game is played. I wanted to show you that I know a thing or two and am not quite such a fool as I look. Do you believe it?"

Rooney's face had cleared somewhat during this explanation. "I believe it," he answered humbly. "I guess you're all right."

"Will you work for me?" continued the other. "Of course I don't expect you to work for nothing. You'll be paid for your time what I can afford. I don't trust you much. You'd think I was a fool if I did. I shall keep this letter handy — right here — see? As we go on, I expect you'll be more ready to take hold, because you'll find things going my way. If I win out, I can make it worth your while; you know that. And I'm going to win out."

"By thunder, I guess you are."

The remark had a ring in it that took Porter's ear, though he did not show it, even by a smile. "Now as to Maloney," he went on. "Had I better see him?"

"No," was the prompt answer. "Maloney don't want nothing to do with it at all. He's got his hands full."

"I should think he might." There was just

a hint of significance in the observation, which ought perhaps to have made Rooney blush; but nature had guaranteed him against the exhibition of any such weakness.

"But he's on your side," continued the saloon-keeper. "That is, he will be. You see, he hates Hinckley."

"Hates Hinckley? I've been told as much."

"And Hinckley's dead against you."

"Why?"

"Dunno. But he is. Hinckley's the man you've got to fight."

"And Burke?"

"Burke!" Evidently Rooney's opinion of Burke's importance was much the same as Smith's.

"Well," said Porter, rising. "I'm glad we have had this little talk, Mr. Rooney. I think we understand each other. Of course, you know Mr. Smith's managing all the details for me. He'll see you and you and he can work things up together." He held out his hand cordially.

Rooney took it. "All right," he answered. "And say, Mr. Porter, the boys like you. Keep right after 'em. That's what does the business. They say there ain't no 'stand off and touch me not' airs about you, and by thunder, there ain't, either. Good-bye."

Smith ran in to see Porter that afternoon. "What have you done to Rooney?" he asked in amazement.

Porter laughed. "Didn't he tell you?"

"No. Just said to me, 'Say, that Porter's a big man, ain't he?'"

"Well, if he didn't see fit to tell you, I don't believe I'd better. These corrupt bargains ought to be kept quiet, don't you think?"

Smith dropped the subject; but his admiration for his chief was perhaps more increased by this success than by anything that had preceded.

CHAPTER XII

In all these personal and political excitements, Miss Buckingham and her world of fancy almost slipped from Porter's mind — almost, not quite. Occasionally, at the latter end of an evening, when he was sitting alone, he thought of Flitters's odd gaiety, of all the jest and song and colour, and felt tempted to renew the unusual experience. Something about the memory of the hostess was pleasant to him also, her grace, her tranquillity, her dignity.

At length, on a Tuesday, he made up his mind to look in for a little while. The jest, the song, the colour were there just the same, as strange, as fascinating as before. But this time the figure of Viola was much more prominent to him. She puzzled him. Was she glad to see him or not? She was more than courteous, kind and gentle; yet once or twice he perceived, or divined, a subtle, momentary reserve, withdrawal, shrinking. What was it? Why was it?

Something of his doubt and interest was probably manifest to Flitters, as they walked home together. "Why don't you go and see her some off evening, when you can talk to her alone? Hasn't she asked you to?"

Yes, she had asked him. And he would. And he did.

It was a cold, snowy night in the latter part of February, when Porter found himself at leisure and inclined to make his call; and the soft warmth of the library in which Viola received him seemed peculiarly attractive and homelike. Wingate was with her and the two men greeted each other cordially.

"Do I thank you for the good word in the *Intelligencer* the other day?" Porter asked.

"It wasn't so good as I could have wished. But we have to consider many things and many people, you know. Personally, I think you're on the right track and I wish you luck."

But Viola turned the conversation from politics to social and artistic matters. It was mainly between her and Wingate; and Porter, as he listened, answering an occasional question, had time to observe his hostess more carefully than he had hitherto done in the crowd and hurry of her evening assemblies. Yes, she was very dignified, very noble, in her rich yet simple dark dress with its heavy lace on the front and sleeves. There was something commanding in her purely cut forehead, in her deep-set, dark, searching eyes, especially in her voice. Porter did not directly compare her with Margaret, would not have done so, yet none the less he was conscious of a certain distinction which Margaret, with all her grace and all her charm, had never quite achieved.

Then Wingate departed, suspecting, perhaps, that the other two would get on better without him. Ease did not come quite at once, however. Viola did not wish to talk politics and Porter was not a ready conversationalist on any other topic. She tried to continue the subject she had been discussing with Wingate — the possibility, probability, of any characteristic American painting or sculpture. But Porter's answers were vague and did not seem to touch the real merits of the question.

"Don't you care for pictures?" she asked at length, abruptly.

"I'm afraid I don't know very much about them." Yet his tone was not quite the common one which implies a pride in the confession of ignorance, and she felt it.

"Don't you want to?"

"Of course; but my life has been busy, and the list of things I know nothing about is so immense that I try to shut my eyes to it."

"It's a pity to do that," she said, but with gentleness and as if she understood his attitude. "It seems to me that we should keep our eyes open always — for things and people. The more one is bent on following one's own path, the more one gains by a glimpse at the paths of others. Don't you think so?" And hardly waiting for his silent agreement, she went on: "Especially as to pictures and everything beautiful, it isn't a question of knowing at all, but of feeling, of letting one's self feel. Don't you

think that the thing that stays by us most, that develops and enlarges our natures most, that is most sure and firm and unfailing in these days of doubt and disbelief, is the thing that is beautiful?"

She was challenging him, and she knew it. If they were to be friends, associates, if he was to enter her world, if he cared to, he might as well know her creed and where she stood.

But he received her challenge, not defiantly, rather in a puzzled way, as if he recognized a new standpoint and was seeking to adjust himself to it. "What is beautiful?" he asked. "Isn't that a matter of doubt and dispute as much as anything else?"

"Ah, no," she answered, with all her quiet enthusiasm. "Not what is beautiful to you, to me. What troubles us who are accustomed to analysis, to trust our cold, uncertain intellect, is the question of what is beautiful to others, of what ought to be beautiful, still the theory of things, the old, old speculation and questioning. What counts, all that really counts is to give yourself up to what is beautiful to you here and now. That stimulates, that enlarges, that broadens and glorifies. It may be that what touches you now may not touch you always. What matter? Leave what is behind and go right on. With every step, the world gets larger and larger and richer and richer."

There was a pause, while he looked straight at her with a slow, sober effort to comprehend.

Then his glance wandered about the room, to the pictures, to the scores of delicate, graceful bits of beauty which she had gathered round her in all her travels. Again the puzzled expression came into his face. "Life is so complicated," he murmured, "when you come to think about it. Your world seems different from mine."

She made no answer, watching his mental effort, with a curiosity which surprised even herself.

"I hope you won't think me rude," he went on; "but isn't this ideal you speak of wholly passive, receptive? I believe in that, too, though I'm afraid I neglect it; and I am more than grateful for anything that helps me to develop that side of my nature. A man ought to abandon himself to what is not himself, to lie utterly fallow and let the world play upon him. In the hurry and passionate rush of modern life we forget these things so easily. But, after all, is that the real aim of our existence? Are we anything without activity, good, bad, or indifferent? It may be small egotism merely, a petty assertion of self in face of the larger working of the universe; but I couldn't be content simply to receive. There is so much which it appears to me needs to be done, so much that can be done, so much that I believe I myself can do. I can't abstain from doing it — or trying."

He was saying just what she had said to her-

self so often lately. These splendid gifts of humanity, these far-reaching powers — were they to be all for nothing? The very faculty of reception itself, was it not made so rich and varied that it might lead to richness and variety of accomplishment? Even with beauty — did not the abounding, the aching sense of it, in all its golden glory, tend most of all to the passionate desire to create, to pour forth more beauty which should bear the own personal stamp of the individual creator? But politics — and abruptly she began to speak her many derogatory thoughts.

"I can understand the desire, the necessity of action," she said. "But — you will pardon me in my turn, won't you? — politics. I can't quite understand how a person — a person — like you can have anything to do with them. They seem to me so bare, so sordid, so contemptible. You must have to mix with so many people whom I could not endure."

He smiled, taking her scorn in good part, even if he felt the haughty sting of it. "The world must be governed, I suppose," he said. "More than that, can there be a nobler, higher form of activity than that of providing for and watching over the general welfare, of standing by the machinery which must run smoothly for the happiness, the existence of every human being, high or low?"

"It sounds well," she answered; "but then the trouble must be with our way of doing it

— this popular government, democracy, universal suffrage, mob rule. How disgusting it all is! As if the majority were not fatally stupid, ignorant, blundering, michievous. To go on the theory that the greater number are necessarily right, when it is so obvious to the shallowest comprehension that the greater number are necessarily wrong!"

"You misunderstand, you misjudge," he interrupted, not smiling now, but with an eagerness, an intensity, which astonished her and fixed her attention at once. "It is true that a hundred years ago everybody thought that democracy meant the millennium. Now that it has come, we see that it does not mean the millennium any more than other foolishly heralded panaceas for the varied ills of poor humanity. And some, the best, rush to the other extreme and are for rejecting it altogether. Yet, when you look at it soberly, perhaps democracy has done all that could be expected of it. As I said, you misjudge it. Nobody pretends that the majority is all-wise, or all-virtuous. Far from it. The theory of those who believe in democracy — and I am one of them — is that the majority will govern themselves better than any class can be trusted to govern them. An upper class or a despot may know better; but will any upper class or any despot do better? Any class, no matter how high or holy, will think of itself first and of the people only afterwards. The average man of the people wants good govern-

ment because he has everything to gain by good government, everything to lose by bad."

"But how can they know?" she asked, more with the desire to hear his answer than to push her own argument. "They are so easily deceived and so often."

"That is true," he said frankly. "That is the great weakness. But the people must learn, are learning, will learn. What is a hundred years to work out such an experiment as this? Human organizations are not perfected at once, but only with shocks and jars, perpetual breakages and set-backs, failure, disappointment, infinite labour and sacrifice. Are we to give up and stand aside, to say the task is hopeless and nothing can be done, because everything does not go just as we wish it?"

"But the people as individuals," she urged, "the surroundings, the associations?"

He smiled, as he had done at first, when she introduced his own personal part in the matter. "Well," he said, "I suppose you'll think I'm not very fastidious; but I like the people, all the people. They not only interest me, they attract me. I don't find them very different in politics from what they are in anything else. Many are smooth and dishonest, many are rough and honest, some are dishonest and rough. All think of themselves before they think of you or me or the other fellow. But I don't find any faults in any of them that I haven't myself, though sometimes I succeed better in keep-

ing them under, sometimes not so well. There's something warm about humanity to me, even when it lies and steals and is obnoxious generally."

She listened with profound attention, but made no answer.

When the clock had ticked solemnly for a few seconds, he spoke again. "I must go. When I came here, I had no idea of talking shop. I wanted to get into your atmosphere — of beauty. Politics are not beautiful, I admit. And I need the other. I know I need it."

She took no notice of this; but when he rose, she shook hands with him and said earnestly: "I liked your talking shop. It's all rather new to me. I'm afraid I'm not much of a democrat by nature; but it's very interesting. Come again."

CHAPTER XIII

It was a pleasant day for Robert Hinckley when he succeeded in getting Burke to dine with him. Hinckley's social ascent from the gutter had been laborious and doubtful, much retarded by Mrs. Hinckley, who, good-natured, fat, red-faced, and effusively vulgar, would have presided more aptly in the kitchen — indeed, it was said she had formerly done so — than in the dining-room. Hinckley knew very well that even Burke represented by no means the top of the Back Bay tree. He knew also that although Burke himself accepted the proffered hospitality for purely political reasons, Mrs. Burke, and that very airy young personage, Miss Margaretta Burke, would as soon have dined in the county jail. Therefore the pleasure, like most of our pleasures, was somewhat embittered in the mixture; and the bitterness showed itself in the form of sharp previous admonitions to the unhappy Mrs. Hinckley. Poor woman, her husband did not try to save much of the artful smoothness of his tongue for her and she had learned long, long ago, that an instrument may be very smooth and also very hard, very sharp, and very stinging. She cared

nothing for political glories which simply kept Bob away from home, nothing for social triumphs which meant that he would run after women who would laugh at her. The gutter! She would rather have stayed in it, as she was born, and swum around contentedly with a drake who was good to her and an endless brood of little ducklets, cackling and scolding. Now there were no little ducklets, and the great house on the north side of Beacon Street seemed lonely as the grave.

"Tom Burke," she said, when her husband announced the visitor. "Well, he ought to be good company anyway. Why doesn't he bring his wife along?"

"His wife wouldn't sit at the same table with you," was the amiable answer.

"Oh, she's another swell, is she? There was a Mrs. Tom Burke — Nellie Flaherty she was — over on Columbus Avenue. I guess she wouldn't ha' been ashamed to sit with me. And I'd rather it was her that was coming. Do you remember her, Bob? You used to be sweet on her."

"No," said Bob, brutally. "And see here. Get up a good dinner. That's about the only part of the thing you can do — if you haven't forgotten."

"I haven't forgotten. You think I'm only fit to be your cook, Bob, don't you? But I am your wife. You can't get rid of me for any of your swells. Oh, yes, I'll have a good dinner."

She did, taking a humble pride in being able to do one thing that would please him. She had a good cook and a skilful butler, and it would have been difficult to find a better prepared or more attractive dinner in Boston. Nevertheless, as long as she was present, there was no ease about it. Her nervous fear of her lord and master was equally manifest in what she said and in what she didn't say, and was far from lessened by the quiet sarcasm with which he treated her. Even Burke's natural Irish serenity and sweetness could not warm the atmosphere. He tried talking politics, but Mrs. Hinckley, as her husband kindly explained, did not know the difference between a ballot and a balloon. He introduced the theatre; but she had no taste for anything but a vaudeville show and didn't dare to say so. In desperation he took up summer resorts; but Mrs. Hinckley had little knowledge of such places. She had once visited Bar Harbor. "But the women were too stuck up to speak to me; so I walked the piazza for three days and came home."

After this the conversation drooped, till the two gentlemen were left alone to their liqueur and cigars.

"And now about politics," Hinckley began.

"Just so," agreed the other, with an unconscious expression of relief which was perfectly visible to his host's keen eye. "About politics."

"Porter's been making progress since we saw each other last."

"So I hear. He's an up-to-date man, Porter is." Burke's tone expressed something of discouragement and something of grudging admiration.

"Well, he's got some new ideas, they tell me," Hinckley went on, in a slow, meditative fashion. "Believes in some dodge or other for giving the governor more power. That's a nice thing, when you're going to be governor yourself, — if you can work it. And he's in for reform — wants to abolish grafts and clean up. It's wonderful how these people who have never had a chance to make any dirt themselves want to go in and clean up."

"Reform! Ideas!" repeated Burke, with vast contempt. "I'm so sick of all that. What good does it do? A great shouting for something impossible till you're elected and then do nothing."

"Just so," assented the chairman quietly. "You and I know that in politics, as in everything else, a man is looking out for himself. He may ride a high horse on the stump, but when a good graft comes his way, who would be fool enough not to take it? They talk of buying votes. Who wouldn't buy votes, if he could get them cheap enough?"

This was pretty plain talk for the gentleman Democrat to swallow, as the speaker shrewdly

guessed. Hinckley saw no other candidate at the moment who would serve his purpose so well as Burke; but Burke was not a man to inspire unlimited confidence. Now seemed a favourable opportunity for finding out whether there was anything in him but twaddle.

"Hm — hm —" he stammered, floundering like a horse pulled up too short. "Isn't that putting it rather strong, you know?"

"You think so? Not too strong for Porter. He's out for reform; but I notice he isn't above a few other little tricks. Whenever there's a labour meeting, he's there, shaking hands all round and setting up the drinks. He's after the wives, too, and daughters. Goes to dances and tells 'em all that father's the biggest man out. He's a clever one."

Burke's face again expressed disgust. "I hate that way of doing things," he cried. "Of course, if a man honestly likes the people and goes about among 'em for the fun of it, that's one thing. I can take a drink with the boys any time, and enjoy it. But we all know Porter isn't that kind of a fellow, likes to get off by himself with a book. It's hypocrisy, that's what I call it, damned hypocrisy."

But even on the expletive his voice weakened, as he caught the chairman's cold and cynical eye watching him. "That's right," said the chairman, "damned hypocrisy. It's fortunate you're born to the business and don't need any damned hypocrisy to do it well. For a man

would have to be a double damned hypocrite to get ahead of Porter."

Burke looked exceedingly discontented and puffed at his cigar for awhile in silence.

"Of course you've heard that he's got Smith working for him for all he's worth?" Hinckley asked.

Burke nodded. "He isn't worth much."

"Did you know he had Rooney pinched, too?"

This time Burke waked up and responded with energy. "Rooney? How in thunder?"

"That's what I'd like to know. We'd all like to know. It's just another of Porter's little tricks. All damned hypocrisy."

"Well," said Burke, thoroughly disgruntled, "I wouldn't have believed a man like Porter would have come to that sort of thing. Sets up for being a reformer, rides the high horse, lectures everybody for political dishonesty, and then puts himself into the hands of fellows like Smith and Rooney."

"Everybody who wants to succeed in politics has got to come to that sort of thing," commented the chairman. "Call it damned hypocrisy or whatever you please, a man who does dirty work has got to do it with dirty tools."

More discontent on the visitor's part, more puffing, and more silence. Somehow he did not feel that he was being treated with all the deference that a prospective governor deserved.

But Hinckley had pushed his lesson far

enough. Just at present Burke was his strongest card, though a weak one; and it was no time to throw him away. So the chairman dropped his cynicism, smiled softly, and put magic into his voice. All damned hypocrisy a spectator would have said; but one doesn't discern these things so well when one is the object of them.

"Mr. Burke, you've got it in you to beat this fellow. As you say, he has to put everything on; but you do it naturally. You're the most popular Democrat in Massachusetts to-day, and I might say the most popular man without lying. You've got the party behind you and Porter hasn't, for all his Smiths and Rooneys. We'll lie low, and when the right time comes, we'll put you through."

The first words of this speech washed the discontent from Burke's countenance, a fact which probably lowered him more in Hinckley's opinion than anything that had gone before. "Of course, you know more about it than I do," said the most popular man in Massachusetts.

"I know all about it," was the quiet rejoinder. "You can have the nomination, if you want it. And I believe you can have the election. The state is as tired of the Republicans as the country is."

"I'm not so sure of that," was the modest comment.

"Well, there's no doubt about the nomination

anyway. Naturally there'll have to be some money put out."

"I suppose so." Burke and money were not friendly. He had a fair income from his law practice, and his wife was rich, but he never knew where the dollars went.

"Well, you leave that to me," Hinckley continued, mentally registering another black mark against his client. "Now let's go over the ground a little."

So they canvassed the different sections of the state, discussing this man, that man, and the other, as prominent in local Democratic circles, and checking off each one as likely to be favourable to Porter or the reverse. The same with the newspapers. Some were regular old reliables, sure to support the machine and any candidate for whom the machine tipped them the wink. Others were cranky, sore over some grievance, always inclined to take up with any new man or notion that presented itself. These must be fixed, if there was any way to fix them.

Through it all Burke found his host's manner flattering, caressing, cajoling. It was, "This editor will be in your interest, I think." "The chairman of that committee is a sorehead, but he couldn't resist you." "You'd better see Jones and say a word to him. You can do it just right." The butter was not spread too heavily, just heavily enough; yet even Burke

was not altogether a fool and he did not trust Hinckley entirely. He noticed that when an issue was especially important and a man especially doubtful, Hinckley said, "I'll see him," not "you." And he suspected dimly that in discussing committees and newspapers Hinckley was as anxious to get information about Burke's strength as to give it. But this was all vague. The dinner had been good, the wines delicious. At the moment, Burke did believe himself to be the most popular Democrat in Massachusetts; and if this was true, what possible interest could Hinckley have to interfere with him? So he smoked and sipped and enjoyed himself; and if smoking and sipping and enjoying himself could have fitted a man to be governor, no candidate, from North Adams to Provincetown, could have had a better chance.

CHAPTER XIV

VIOLA had found her visitor interesting, more interesting when she thought him over afterwards than even when he was present. His theories of politics and democracy were quite new to her and her whole nature rebelled against them. She did not want to believe that the people were competent to govern. She wanted the governing to be done by a class — a heaven-sent class — her class. Yet when she thought of the heaven-sent class as personified in Dudley Heath and set Porter over against him — Well, those things were out of her sphere. But Porter had expressed an interest in her world of art and thought and beauty. There at any rate she could help him. And she felt a considerable curiosity as to how soon he would come to be helped.

The curiosity gave place to marked disappointment when he had come and she had missed him. This was on a Friday when he had no reason to expect her to be at home. He came again on the regular Tuesday; but some sudden necessity kept her away and he found only Miss Tucker and two or three other mem-

bers of "the family." Afterwards Miss Tucker sounded his praises to her niece: "such a gentlemanly man and knew the Tuckers in Foxbridge. You don't feel that he's making fun of you, as so many young people do nowadays."

Then Viola wrote a note of apology for her absence. "I rarely miss more than one or two Tuesdays in the year. Come again soon and see."

On the next Tuesday every one was full of the comic opera. Flitters had written the libretto in a week after the subject was first mentioned. McCarthy's methods were less rapid, but the score was completed at last and Flitters's universal acquaintance procured the acceptance of the piece, with the promise of its production at the end of the season, somewhere about the middle of May. Now, toward the latter part of March, rehearsals were beginning, and every one at Viola's had heard scraps of the music and the text, and was anxious to hear more.

"Just a hint or two," said Flitters, as he seated himself at the piano. "Enough to give you an appetite, not enough to satisfiy it. 'Mosquitos' is the name, as you've heard. Chorus, dressed as mosquitos, of the innumerable sweethearts of a gentleman, who, with lamentable incapacity for profiting by experience, has got engaged to one in every place he came to and has come to a good many places.

Ravishing the mosquito music is, simply ravishing, as light and graceful as the buzz and motions of the creatures themselves. You wouldn't think it to look at Eugene, would you? I know he would like to play it; but I will." So he did, and sang a verse here and there, as light and graceful as the music. Then he went on and gave them other bits, with a trailing comment of explanation. "The last wooing of him of the many loves. For there comes a final wooing that gets him into trouble. The pitcher that goes too often to the well — you've heard the proverb. Eugene has put a wonderful plaintiveness into it, I think — and so have I. The long-drawn melancholy sweetness of the utterance of a man who is in the irresistible grasp of fate, the most fatal fate of feminine witchery.

"'Oh, pitiful young man struck blind with beauty!'
'*C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée.*'

Who wouldn't drop into his arms, or like a ripe cherry into his mouth? She, the inimitable, final she, the fatal she, is about to, when — but I won't spoil my climax. Then there's the political chorus. We must have that, and you must all sing it. Wait." He repeated the words to them and played the music two or three times over. They halted a little on the first two verses; but by the third they got fairly going and made the chandeliers ring, Wingate with

his solid bass, McCarthy with his baritone, Flora with her glorious soprano, and the others as they could.

"They filled their pockets with clean bank-notes,
They stuffed their breeches, they stuffed their coats,
Oh, gee, but they went after votes!
Hurrah for Billy, the guv'nor.
They grafted him on to the green Bay State
With all the rest of their lovely slate;
And then they sat down by the corpse to wait.
Hurrah for Billy, the guv'nor."

Just as the thunder of this delectable verse began, Porter appeared at the door of the room. Busy as they all were with their music, no one but Flitters saw him, and Flitters, appreciating the situation, put redoubled vim and vigor into his own performance and that of the others. Then, stopping short and rising, he cried, "Ladies and gentlemen, behold the man himself." At which the rest of the company, becoming aware of the audience, burst into mingled laughter and cheers.

"You see," said Flitters, stepping forward; and he met Porter's undisguised astonishment with such explanations as were necessary. "You can't sing, of course; or won't," he continued, "too dignified — such a lamentable, useless thing this dignity. The rest of us will go on enjoying ourselves, while you are wishing you knew how."

Porter accepted the invitation and felt that he was enjoying himself very much, exchanging

a few words with his hostess, and watching the tumult of gaiety on the other side of the room.

First Flitters went on with his extracts from the opera, the others listening, applauding, and joining in when they could. Wingate was standing by Ruth and she seemed kinder to him than usual, giving her eager interest to all he said, her round, childish face breaking now and again into its wonderfully dimpled smile. Wingate felt the influence and became animated in his turn, so that Porter could not help noticing it.

"Wingate seems — " he began. Then he stopped.

"Yes," said Viola, with a half-smile, which did not last, "he does seem — I am sorry."

Porter soon perceived why she was sorry.

"Well," said Flitters, "I could keep it up for ever; but I know Eugene is dying for his turn. I can't understand why he hasn't taken it away from me before. Go on, old man, charm the ladies. I can't do anything but amuse them."

Without a word of comment or apology, McCarthy, casting just the briefest glance at Ruth and Wingate, took up his violin and began. And even those who had heard him many times before, said they had never heard him play as he did then. To be sure, his technique may not have been that of an older and more highly trained musician; but he was playing

his own music and putting all himself into it, not the common self, the self which had had no breeding, no education, did not know how to walk, or sit, or stand, or speak; but the instinctive, higher, eternal self, which thought nothing, heard nothing, cared for nothing but music, which dreamed music all day and redreamed it all night, and had but one passion, one ambition, to speak in music for ever to the whole listening or unlistening world. It was a sort of fantasia that he played, a summing up of the music of his opera; now weird, wistful, plaintive, pathetic; now swift, gay, glittering and sparkling with infectious laughter; now witchlike, fairylike, full of strange intervals and shifting rhythms, as the dance of motes in sunlight or of fays in the melancholy glimmer of the waning moon.

When he stopped, his audience was too much overcome even to applaud and Flitters spoke for them all, crying out, " Oh, Eugene, Eugene, you don't look it. If you did, you would look like Apollo and Orpheus and Saint Cecilia — not Raphael's — all rolled into one. And you don't, you know."

But the most obvious tribute of admiration was unquestionably Ruth's. The minute McCarthy began to play, her eyes, her whole soul through her eyes, were fixed on him and continued fixed until the end. The expression of her face followed the expression of the music, saddened, drooped, when the music saddened,

and when the air was gay, lightened, laughed, danced, as if all the forest elves were dancing in her heart. Not a whisper, not a look, did she give to Wingate during the whole performance, any more than if a stranger were beside her or no man at all.

And Porter, noticing this after Viola's remark, although he also was sufficiently absorbed and astonished by the music, could not but see what it meant. "About Wingate," he said to his companion later, "I am sorry, too."

Then they all had supper as gaily and as abundantly as usual, and McCarthy subsided into the commonest of common mortals. His attitude towards Ruth was exceedingly curious. It seemed that in his mere manly capacity he felt as if she were above him, out of his world altogether, although his art world might be equally above her. He was certainly not attentive to her in the ordinary sense; yet the attentions — never for a moment unmaidenly — which her exuberant admiration lavished upon him were accepted as the dry earth accepts a shower.

And Wingate felt himself to be ridiculous, as a man of forty does feel himself in such circumstances — much more so than he actually is. To escape the feeling, when they went down-stairs again, he sought out Porter, while the others entered into a new game, of Flitters's invention, an ingenious modification of capping verses, in which Flora and Laura

shone, while Constance floundered hopelessly and had always the bewildered air of a person who has hurried to catch a train and lost it.

"A little young for us, perhaps," Wingate suggested.

"Well, no, I hope not," answered Porter contentedly. "I don't like to think I'm too old for anything. But a little too clever — for me. My wits never work well on that sort of thing."

"Your wits? They're all right — and more. Porter," went on the journalist, after a pause, "I've got to the point where I want to have a talk with you."

"Talk away," was the smiling reply.

"Just so. I've followed your ideas for a good while — your ideas and you — I've heard about Smith and Rooney — and I believe you're on the track of a big thing."

"Well," agreed Porter, with his usual frankness, "I believe so, too. But you never can tell."

"No; but I've thought it over a good deal and I've made up my mind that the *Intelligencer* will back you."

"Wingate!" exclaimed the other. This was more than he had hoped for — as yet.

"Of course, you know what I mean. We're an independent paper and we can't run a campaign, tie ourselves body and soul to it, after the fashion of some of our esteemed contemporaries. But we'll back you as strongly as we

ever backed any one — give you a good word whenever we can."

"I understand all about it," Porter answered. "I hope you understand what it means to me."

"I needn't tell you," went on the other, "that I'm not fully posted on your theories. It's you I believe in. I gather that you want to shake up the legislature and put it into its place — let the governor do the governing."

Porter nodded.

"And have a cabinet, put the secretaries right into the legislature, as in England. Does that mean that the initiative of all legislation should come from them?"

"No, no, I shouldn't tie it up in any such way as that. There must be a certain amount of private legislation always. What I care most about is free and open legislative discussion, in which the executive, as representing the whole state, should have a leading part. To that end I think all bills of general importance should be at least approved by the department officers."

Wingate listened thoughtfully. Then he brought up other points, on all of which Porter gave a ready answer, though he admitted sometimes that it was not a final one. "This is theory so far," he said. "Like any theory that is good for anything, it must be subject to modification in practice. Let me try it once. Only let me try it. The main principle is right. The details will take care of themselves."

"You'll take care of them," agreed Wingate

with enthusiasm. "I like the sound of the theory and should be glad to see it tried anyway. But I like the sound of you better still. There's a ring to you. And now," went on the newspaper man, in his short, sharp fashion, "about money."

"Money," repeated Porter. "Well, of course, money is a difficulty; but, after all, it's very early yet to talk seriously about a campaign. I suppose, if I'm nominated, the state committee will see to money."

"That depends," was the sage comment. "But you must get nominated first. It's there that the fight's coming. I understand Hinckley means to make a fight of it. Money will be awfully useful."

"Well," came the slightly reluctant answer, "I suppose you'll think I'm a fool, but I'm putting what little money I can spare into it myself. It isn't much. Not enough to do any good, I'm afraid. Smith and Joe Warren are acting as a committee for me, and they have charge of things."

"I don't think you're a fool except in one way — to be wasting your own money when you might get all you want from other people. Now you leave this end of it to me. I can't talk nor get up theories. And I don't meddle with practical politics. I can't run your campaign. But I can raise money. I'll be treasurer of your committee, if you like, and I'll see that you have enough."

At this point the approach of Viola interrupted them. "I'll drop in at your office in a few days, when I've looked over the ground," Wingate said.

"Really," answered Porter, "I hardly know how to thank you."

"Can't you gentlemen give some assistance over there?" Viola asked.

"What is going on?" inquired Porter.

"Well, I believe they are all absorbed in writing and drawing advertisements for — Hanks's very useful article of dress. George professes himself to be at a loss, says the reservoir is absolutely exhausted, although I believe, as a matter of fact, he is making three suggestions to all the others' one. And he has offered a prize for the design which shall be at once, as he says, most decorous and most decorative."

"And the prize is —?" Porter asked.

"A pair of the very useful articles in question."

"Just what I need," laughed Wingate, seizing the excuse to slip in beside Ruth, who, at the moment, had got separated from McCarthy and was looking eagerly over Laura's shoulder.

But Porter remained where he was and Viola sat down beside him.

"I'm afraid you think we have a good deal of foolish laughter here," she said.

"On the contrary, I like it. I should like

to laugh myself — at a great many things — but I don't quite know how."

"Yes," she agreed. "It's odd. One has that sense of the immense absurdity of things — not so much a bitter, satirical, as a really humorous sense — of the trifling unimportance of all the great, serious things that men struggle and fight for. One has it quite as much as George, perhaps. But one doesn't laugh as he does. A feeling, a wholly false feeling of one's own dignity interferes — do you think?"

"I don't know. I've never learned to laugh — never lived with people who laughed. It's quite strange to me; — alters the face of the world, in fact. I don't think the Puritans ever laughed."

"No, I don't think they did. They left all the laughter behind them — over in Shakespeare's England. And though we aren't Puritans — it is so hard to shake off the inheritance."

"I don't want to shake it off," he said. "Only to add something more to it, something different."

She shook her head. "It can't be done, I'm afraid. Can the sunny temperament which enjoys and the iron temperament which accomplishes be yoked together?"

Flitters had been watching this serious conference for some moments. Now he came over and interrupted it. "What are you talking

about?" he asked, in his odd, abrupt, yet gentle manner.

"Laughter," was Viola's brief answer.

"*Mon Dieu!* Who would have thought it? Don't. You aren't fit to. You, Viola, you've lived in the shadow of the rose of joy all your life and you've never caught a grain of the fragrance. You surround yourself with laughter; but you walk through it like a ghost at a banquet, chilling every one you touch. You were born serious and I really believe you pass hours in serious reflection on the possibilities of life — which will never be anything but possibilities — or impossibilities — for you. Can't you take the actual for what it is? And he — that Porter — he's a statesman. To be a statesman you must be without a sense of humour. You speak of Lincoln and Cæsar perhaps? But they were the exceptions. Your Burleighs, your Cromwells, your Richelieus, your Washingtons, your Pitts, your Websters, — witty occasionally, but they took themselves and their place in the world with such ponderous seriousness, as this man does. You discuss laughter! Separate, I beg of you, if you want the rest of us to enjoy ourselves. Porter, go talk to Flora. She won't discuss laughter with you; but she'll laugh at you. I'll talk to Viola."

Porter smiled and did as he was told. Most people did with Flitters. Somehow what he wanted seemed to be the thing you wanted yourself.

As he walked home later, in the fresh March wind, Porter tried to adjust himself to these new elements of life. It was strange to laugh at everything, even at the august commonwealth of Massachusetts — strange, but with a certain sweet savour. Yet the commonwealth was there all the same, calling him, as it seemed. And Wingate's offer was certainly very encouraging, more so, perhaps, than anything that had yet occurred.

CHAPTER XV

"WELL, Dudley, you're very late about coming to be congratulated," said Viola to her cousin, as he entered her music-room one Sunday evening. She had been reading a solid book on government, something not unusual with her of late; but she put it down quietly in such a way that her visitor hardly noticed it.

"Congratulated?" he echoed in pretended bewilderment. "Oh, yes, that little matter. You congratulated me long ago. Have you forgotten?"

"No; but that was only a moment at the Woodrows' — not formal. You've drawn quite a prize. I know Miss Ferguson."

"Yes, she told me about your call. I wish I'd been there."

"We got on very well without you. Your *fiancée* is able to hold her own."

"Just so — and a lot of other people's, too. I know you look down on her, Viola. But then you look down on me as well. She and I understand each other."

"That's fortunate," answered Viola, with infinite gravity. "I should imagine you were wonderfully adapted to each other. And it may be that marriage will sober you, Dudley."

"Sober me? Let us pray that it may exhilarate me. I am one mass of dull, sodden soberness already. I look for exhilaration from morning to night; but I can't find any. As for the adaptation, I should have been so much more adapted to you, Viola."

This sudden declaration did not in the least disturb the object of it. "I hope your future bride understands your astonishing frankness as well as your other good qualities."

"And more than imitates it, I do assure you. Her father, who is thoroughly middle-class, cultivates conventional mendacity; but she speaks right out, unless, of course, lying is an object. Probably you've observed that brutal frankness is one of the distinguishing marks of the upper class?"

"In which it resembles the lower," was the mild suggestion.

"Exactly — as against the hideous hypocrisy of the middle. In its fight with the middle class the aristocracy turns naturally to the mob, expecting, of course, to trample on it afterwards."

"Well," Viola answered, "in this country one has a haunting feeling that one may belong to the middle-class one's self; and I dislike it as much as you do."

"There never was more of a thorough born and bred aristocrat than you are," was the reassuring comment. "Now Porter, on the other hand —." He paused a moment to

watch the effect of the name; for of course that was what he had come for, at Wood's instigation, after keeping away all winter to allow their scheme a chance to work. But there was no visible effect whatever, and he went on. "Porter is middle-class all through, his ambitions, his ideals, — fancy! — his morals, and his person. That's the only real satisfaction that I have derived from my engagement so far — the comfort of having beaten him."

"And you expect to go on beating him?" she asked with perfect apparent indifference.

He looked at her carefully before he answered. Was she indifferent? Was she ironical? He could not tell. "I don't know," he said. "You don't think success in love a bad omen? But then there's so little love about it. Yes, of course, I expect to beat him."

"Do you know, I doubt very much whether you do beat him."

Still the same vague, uncaring tone. It irritated him. What did she mean? Had Porter interested her, bored her, exasperated her? He must make a bold push to find out.

"Look here, Viola," he began, his manner decidedly more serious than it had been hitherto, "You remember our talk several months ago?"

If she did, she made no sign, just kept her dark eyes fixed on him, without a smile.

"Of course you do. And Porter's been here often, as I know. Now, what do you make of him?"

He put the question short and sharp, as if to force an answer from her suddenly; but the answer was neither sudden, nor slow, nor doubtful, nor embarrassed. "I like him," she said.

"Like him! Lord, what a woman's answer. Can it be that you are a woman, Viola?"

"I have never seen any reason to suspect it. Did you wish me to dislike him?"

"What has liking to do with the matter anyway? I wanted you to work on him, to use your great eyes, and your slow, seductive, haughty ways, and your money, to wean him from his nonsense and make a good, commonplace, useful man of him. Can't you do it? Have you failed?"

"My slow, seductive, haughty ways, and my money," she repeated, not in the least angry, but as impenetrable as ever. "I'm not sure that I care for the *rôle*."

But he was beginning to be angry, or pretended to be. "Why couldn't you find that out before? It wasn't for me, you know, that you were doing it. It was for your country, patriotism, the Roman matron act. There's a great deal of the Roman matron about you."

"You think so?" she answered, not varying a grain from her non-committal tone.

Heath showed his vexation by getting up and taking a double turn through the room. Then he sat down again and put his feelings into words. "I wouldn't have believed it possible.

I wouldn't have believed it possible. That you, acute, keen-sighted, cynical, with your finger on the central knot of human motives, of human selfishness, should have been duped by the shallow reveries, the tall talk of such a cheap demagogue as Mat Porter! Perhaps you believe in his famous nostrums, his universal panaceas for making a heaven on earth and getting rid of all us grafters and old, corrupt, rascally politicians. Perhaps you believe he's going to be governor, and wish him to be, and are anxious to be enrolled yourself in the glorious army of middle-class reformers. Oh, Viola, my cousin! I am disappointed in you."

She heard him out with perfect patience and a serene smile. She did not even hasten about her answer. "Oh, Dudley, my cousin, you overheat yourself. I have not enlisted as lieutenant in Mr. Porter's Quixotic campaign to make over the world. I dislike the middle-class, with their stupid, narrow conventions and hypocritical prejudices, as I've told you. But I like Mr. Porter. I'm sorry you object to the phrase."

"Like him," repeated Heath, with scorn renewed and redoubled. Then he asked, again sharp and sudden, "Does he like you?"

But Viola was unmoved as ever. "Hadn't you better ask him?" she said. "And now, Dudley, if you don't mind, suppose we talk of something else. Not that I have any objection to talking of Mr. Porter. Only I think we've

exhausted the subject. He isn't important enough. Do tell me what your wedding plans are."

Heath's only great quality, the one that had pushed him up in the world, was his power of controlling himself; so he talked about his wedding plans for half an hour and then took his leave.

Tuesday morning he found Wood in his office.

"I've seen Viola," Heath began shortly.

"Well?"

"I don't know whether it's well or not. It was always your scheme, you know. I never believed in it much."

"You never believe in anything much. It's your weakness."

"And my strength."

"I don't think you'll find it so," Wood remarked. "However, that's not business. Doesn't she take to him?"

"I'm afraid she does."

"Well, that's what we want, isn't it? Does he take to her?"

"I asked her and she told me to ask him."

"Ah? Sharp, isn't she? Does he go there much, do you know?"

"So, so — from all I hear," Heath answered, with indifference. Then he added more energetically: "It's a fool scheme, I always said it was. It's running too much risk. She's too deep for me. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if

she were to fall in love with him and marry him."

"I thought, from what you said, she was sharp," Wood objected.

"She is sharp — in her way; but so is he — damned sharp."

"Well," Wood went on. "That's all right. You remember, when we first talked of this thing, I said I didn't care if she did marry him. If she does, he won't count any more. I'll work it so he won't count any more."

"I'm not so sure you can."

"Wait and see, my boy. Meantime, we've got other fish to fry. It seems early to begin; but it's none too early. Porter's at it lively enough — Smith fixed, Rooney fixed. I can understand Smith. But Rooney must have meant a good job of handling. He's got Hinckley dead against him, though, and Hinckley's worth all the rest."

"Burke?" was Heath's monosyllabic inquiry.

And the monosyllabic answer, "Burke!" covered that branch of the subject.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" inquired the Republican candidate.

Wood was thoughtful for a few moments and chewed the end of his cigar. "Of course, we can't do anything very active. On our side you're all right. Nobody doubts that. As to the Democrats, keep close watch and lend a hand where we can. Burke is the man for us.

If Hinckley sticks to him — and Hinckley knows as well as we do that Burke can never be elected, it's only to down Porter — why, Burke stands a fair chance for the nomination and it's up to us to do Burke a good turn in a quiet way. The papers, Dudley, the papers, — it's all in the papers just now. And say, — " he went on, after a little more meditative chewing — " you would be just the man to write a good story about your own good qualities, wouldn't you? "

" I should say so," was the hearty reply.

" That's it. Anybody else would be likely to miss some of them. Well, write it and I'll have it printed — just to keep things moving. Want to write one about Porter, too? "

" Rather! "

" Do it. And praise him. Say that it's fortunate the Democrats have taken a turn at last and got a man who might almost be a Republican. Point out that he's old New England stock, conservative, has no sympathy with extreme labour or radical ideas, inclines more every day socially to the better sort and is a thorough gentleman. Of course a man of that stamp can't be elected, because he's only a kind of imitation Republican, but it's a credit to the state to have him for a candidate. Strange, though, that the Democrats should have sense enough to put him up. Then sign it ' Old Republican.' See? "

" I see. Why not sign it ' Old Fox '? "

Wood paid no attention to the compliment. "Then we'll have one or two letters written to rub it in along the same lines: just a gentle hint now, you know, about his getting thick with your cousin and her crowd. We'll work it harder later, when it will do more good."

"Want me to write 'em all?" inquired the nephew with sympathy and appreciation.

"Why not? I haven't got any one who can do it better. And it may keep you out of mischief for awhile."

"But my senatorial duties?" Heath objected.

"Those are mischief, aren't they?"

"That sounds more like me than you," said the other, rising. "But it's the busiest men that do the most work. And I'll write you such a set of stories as you never read before."

So saying, he took his leave, and as he walked up to the State House, he thought of the stories and of several other things.

CHAPTER XVI

HEATH'S visit, his open cynicism, his cool selfishness, left Viola more appreciative than ever of Porter's charm, of his earnest, simple, manly enthusiasm. True, she had told Heath that she liked the man and not his ideas. Hitherto it had certainly been so. Heath was right when he said there never was a more thorough aristocrat bred and born than Viola Buckingham. She had all the instincts of her race and of her class. She was ready to patronize her inferiors, ready to help them, ready to make any sacrifice for them — provided it was always understood that they were her inferiors. Such had been her training, such had been her inheritance from both sides of her family for generations back. Nothing in her surroundings had ever interfered with these instincts or modified them. Yet she was thoroughly just, thoroughly noble. Her mind reached far and pierced deep. The tone and temper of a man like Heath disgusted and revolted her. If aristocratic ideas and principles produced such men as that, perhaps aristocratic ideas and principles were wrong, or not wholly right. If democratic ideas produced

such men as Porter, they might at least be worth looking into. His ideas would be worth looking into, at any rate, and she would look into them, when the proper opportunity should offer.

On the Tuesday evening after her interview with Heath, Porter appeared for a little while. There was not much chance for discussing ideas. The surroundings were unfavourable. But he talked to her and Wingate and Flitters about the progress of the campaign.

"Such dirty tools as you have to handle," objected Wingate. "That's the pretty, one of the pretty parts, of politics."

"Yes," said Viola. "I don't see how you or any sensitive person can stand it."

Porter laughed. "I'm afraid I'm not sensitive — it must be that I'm not. For I don't mind the dirty tools, as you call them, in the least. They interest me, they amuse me. I have a real personal fondness for the dirtiest of them. They're all human, the dirtiest oftentimes the most so; really much more human than half my instructors in college used to be, for instance."

"Good, Porter!" cried Flitters, much approving. "I believe, if you weren't so abominably earnest, you might have a genuine sense of humour, after all."

But Wingate stuck to his point. "Hinckley, you find him charmingly human?"

Still Porter laughed. "I've no doubt Hinck-

ley's particularly human. But he's no tool of mine. I wish he were. He's digging as hard as he can against me all the time with the point and both edges."

"Well, Rooney, then. I know you've got him — by his humanity, I suppose."

"Why, yes, I think we might say very much by his humanity."

"And Smith — but Smith's different. I know him and like him."

"So you ought," answered Porter warmly. "Smith is different; not more human than the others, but a sharper tool, certainly — as bright as steel and as reliable. He's my right-hand man, Smith, frank, straightforward, energetic. Of course he's only a mechanic and can't quote the classics; but he has all of the gentleman that's worth having."

"I should like to see Mr. Smith," said Viola, in her tranquil way. She was thinking how different Porter's description of his friends was from Heath's. "Could I?"

"You, Viola?" interposed Flitters. "Don't you know your limits yet?"

"He's not your sort, Viola, exactly," Wingate agreed.

But Viola, still tranquil, repeated her question to Porter, "Could I?"

Porter hesitated. "Why, of course — "

"I don't mean in a crowd like this. But couldn't you bring him quietly some evening? He'd be glad to talk about you, I've no doubt.

Probably you think, as George does, that I don't know my limits. I do. That's why I am anxious to get outside of them."

"You'll find a territory so vast that you'll be lost in it," murmured Flitters the irrepressible.

But Viola took no notice, simply waited, without speaking, for Porter's answer.

It came, as quiet as her speech had been. "To tell you the truth, I doubt whether he will come. As I said, after all, he's only a mechanic. He has taken up, with natural aptitude, the essentials of a gentleman; but he hasn't the habit of drawing-rooms. I should have to tell him frankly that he is invited to satisfy a lady's curiosity. Probably he won't care to do it. He will suspect it means being made fun of."

"You know it wouldn't mean that," Viola said.

And Flitters: "You surely do, Porter. You know Viola by this time well enough to appreciate that she may be the occasion of the laughter which is in others, but she never laughs herself."

"Tell him," Viola went on, "that I am a woman" — ever so slight a stress on woman — "who has lived in a narrow world and wants to see something of a larger one. And tell him, especially, that I am a woman who is beginning to believe in you and would like to see him because he believes in you."

"To get some support for your wavering

confidence?" asked Porter, with a smile. "I'll tell him."

"Exactly?"

"Exactly."

"And you'll bring him?"

"Why, yes," he answered, after a moment's hesitation. "Under the circumstances I think I may say I'll bring him."

And in the course of a week or ten days he did so. Smith had refused absolutely at first. But Porter pleaded.

"What does she want to see me for?" answered the Labourite. "Just to laugh at me. I'm not the man for parlours and fine furniture. She's a swell and a snob. You can talk to that sort of people, because you can talk to anybody; though, to tell you the truth, Mr. Porter — " he stopped short.

"Tell the truth, by all means," said his leader, smiling. "It's your strong point — yours and mine."

"Not when it's none of my business," was the abrupt reply.

"But this is your business. You were going to say that — the less I have to do with swells and snobs, the better, weren't you?"

Smith spoke up, square and frank as usual: "Well, I was. You can damn me, if you like."

"I sha'n't damn you. Indeed, I'm much of your opinion. I don't think the smart set and I should get on very well. But this — Miss Buckingham seems to be altogether different.

She's rich, I suppose, and she has some loafers about her. But she strikes me as a noble, earnest woman who wants to make her life bigger."

"Handsome?" asked Smith, not so much insolently as curiously.

Porter stopped to consider. "Handsome? Why, yes, she is. But you'd never think about that." Then he quoted to Smith the exact words in which Viola had framed her invitation and ended by saying: "If you'll go, I shall take it as a personal favour."

"Oh, if you put it that way, I go, of course. What do I care anyway? Don't suppose I'm afraid of her."

Viola had been notified beforehand and had arranged to have no one with her but Miss Tucker, thinking it would be easier so for all concerned. When the guests arrived, Porter devoted himself to Miss Tucker, who was always ready with new questions about the Tuckers of Foxbridge, and Viola and Smith quickly began an animated conversation.

"I take it as very good of you to come here, Mr. Smith," Viola said.

"I'm glad to come, if you want to see me." On the whole, his manner was successful — just a shade of assertion in it, perhaps, the least suggestion of "You think I'm not at home; but I'm at home anywhere," yet hardly more than became a proper, manly independence. And Viola's ease, her grave beauty as she sat opposite him, all in quiet black and white, had their

natural effect and soon made him as easy as she was.

"I do want to see you," repeated the hostess, "and I'll tell you why. I've always lived — well, I won't call it an idle life, there's been some profit in it, I think; but idle you would call it certainly. And I've always regarded politics as rather — rather — "

"Dirty?" Smith suggested.

"Well, yes, we'll say dirty. Since I've known Mr. Porter, I've come to think that, dirty or not, perhaps one ought to learn something about them. And Mr. Porter says you — "

"Says I know something about 'em, dirt and all?"

"He didn't put it in any such way as that. But he gave me to understand that you were a thoroughly honest, high-minded man, who devoted your life to politics and took very radical views of things."

Smith laughed. "Say, I'd better have kept away after he'd said all that about me, hadn't I?"

Viola laughed in sympathy. "I have no doubt you'll live up to your reputation. And you are a radical, I suppose?"

He shook his head. "I don't know much about such big words and theories. I leave that to Mr. Porter. I just know there's lots of things wrong in this state and I'd like to see some of 'em come out right, before I die."

"I know there are plenty of things wrong; but what special things have you in mind? Do you cherish a violent hatred for all capitalists?"

"I ain't a fool," was the brusque reply. "I shouldn't mind being a capitalist myself. As long as there's men who like better to save their money than to spend it, there'll always be some rich and others poor. And it's right. What I want is to have everybody have a square deal."

"And you don't think everybody has a — square deal — even under our free government?"

The labour leader's countenance indicated a civil effort to suppress contempt. "Not exactly," he answered. "I want to see things fixed so that the capitalist pays his taxes like the poor man instead of getting off for two-thirds of his property scot free. I want to see things fixed so that the capitalist can't go into the legislature and buy laws that will rob the people to fill his pocket. When we've got a few of those little things attended to, everybody will have something like a fairer chance anyway."

The man's tone was slightly truculent; but Viola felt that he was honest in his purposes and she enjoyed listening to him. For half an hour she kept on putting questions and he answered them readily, simply, always intelligently, though it was evident that his information was limited and his range of thought narrow. At length, when he had given her an ex-

tensive account of the reforms which he desired, she asked: "And do you feel confident that Mr. Porter will be able and willing to do all this or help to do it?"

He paused for a moment, looking at her keenly. "No," he said, "I know well enough Mr. Porter and me don't agree on everything. It may come round, after he's elected, that I'll have to stand up and fight him. But it'll be a square fight, because he's a square man. And that's why I'm for him every time. I believe he's got a good idea. It sounds well anyhow and I'd like to have him have a chance to try it. But he's worth a good deal more than any idea. If you'd knocked round as much as I have in politics, you'd know a man, when you saw him. And Porter's a man. It ain't only that he's got nerve. It ain't only that he's clean and straight. I saw that first and that was enough for me. But now I know he can talk to men and handle 'em. When a man can do that and is straight, too, he's my man every time."

But here Porter joined them and interrupted. "It seems to me I heard my name," he said smiling.

"What if you did?" Smith answered. "You didn't hear anything that could hurt your feelings, I guess." Then he continued his talk to Viola, while Porter sat down and listened, with much amusement. "Yes, Porter's the man for me and I believe he's the man for the party and

the state. But there's got to be some tall fighting done. Did you see those two editorials in the *Mercury,* one about Porter and the other about Heath?"

"I believe Mr. Heath is Miss Buckingham's cousin," Porter interposed.

"That so?" Smith inquired, his tone implying no congratulations.

Viola assented. "But don't mind that," she said.

"I won't," Smith replied. "He's a smart man enough, and knows all the tricks of politics, and he's got Wood behind him. Is he your cousin, too?"

"No," answered Viola. And she straightened up ever so little as she said it.

"I'm glad of that, because he's a rascal."

"And the editorials?" inquired the lady of the house.

"You haven't seen 'em, then? You'd better. One cracked up Heath sky high. Well, that's all right enough. And the other hit Porter in the back, said he was just the sort of man the Republicans would be likely to choose, conservative, respectable, in with the swells, and a lot more — said it was queer the Democrats should think of such a man anyway. Everything's fair enough in politics, I suppose; but that's sharp work. I'll bet a good deal Wood or Heath wrote it himself — both of 'em."

"I can't think Mr. Heath would do such a

thing," protested Viola, for form's sake, though in her inmost heart she thought he might very well.

"Of course, he's your cousin," replied Smith apologetically.

"At any rate, you can't let such insinuations go," urged the new convert. All the immense spirit of fight in her was roused by this underhanded method of attack.

Porter laughed. "Such vile insinuations as that I am a gentleman?"

But Smith was on his hostess's side. "That's what I say. Give 'em as good as they send. Put it right back to 'em."

Porter was graver as he answered. "Very well. Why don't you write a reply and set me straight?"

"Can't," said Smith. "I'm no writer."

"Do you want me to do it myself? I don't care for that way of going to work, writing such things without a signature. Later on I may decide to use the papers and come right out with all I have to say — not as to this matter, but as to everything — over my own name. I'd rather some one else would do it, though; that is, it would be more effective."

"Who can?" asked Smith.

Viola said nothing, seemed almost to be thinking of other things.

"As to these editorials," Porter went on, "Wingate was speaking of them yesterday and

said he should take some notice of them in the *Intelligencer.*"

"Oh, yes," remarked Smith, with scorn. "The *Intelligencer!*"

But Viola still said nothing. And Porter, thinking she was bored, rose to take his leave.

When he and Smith were outside together, Porter asked, "Are you as much opposed as ever to my acquaintance with Miss Buckingham?"

"She's a fine woman," Smith answered, energetically. "No doubt about that. And I guess she's interested in our side all right. All the same, that set won't help you much. Look at the *Mercury* editorial."

"I sha'n't choose my friends to please the Republicans," answered Porter, with a certain haughtiness.

"That's just what I'm afraid you might be doing. All the same, now I've seen her, I don't know as I blame you."

CHAPTER XVII

A SHORT time after Smith's little journey into the golden world, Porter received a note from Viola.

"DEAR MR. PORTER: I enjoyed your political friend's visit exceedingly. He is an honest man, and he set me thinking more than I have thought for a good many years. As a result, I want to see you and get light. It seems wrong to ask for your time. Still I do ask for it. Will you come and see me some evening — any evening? Only telephone and let me know beforehand. Sincerely yours,

"VIOLA BUCKINGHAM."

Porter went, of course.

As soon as he was seated, Viola began, her eyes very serious and earnest: "Now, Mr. Porter, I want to know just what your political ideas are. Can I understand them?"

"If you can't, they must be very useless. Think of the people who have got to understand them."

"Then tell me about them. I've always despised politics because I thought all politicians

were dishonest. Now I've seen two politicians who are honest and I want to know something about politics."

Porter took her as seriously as she spoke. "It will be a longish lecture, if I'm to make it clear," he said. "I'll be as brief as I can. If I bore you, say so."

"You won't bore me." She settled herself comfortably in her chair and her brows slightly drawn showed her all interest and attention.

"My story opens with the legislature," he began.

"Just one moment," she said. "I won't interrupt very often. Could you tell me at the start why you are a Democrat? It seems — "

He completed her sentence: "It seems like beginning deliberately on the weaker side, I suppose; and then it seems a little low."

"I didn't say that," she interrupted again. "Of course I know that some of the best men in Massachusetts have been Democrats."

"But the rank and file don't please you. However, that doesn't count, does it? In the first place, the Republicans have been long in power. All parties in power are conservative. They want to keep what they've got. You can't make them take hold of new ideas. More than that, my idea, at present, requires insistance on the state governments. It is just as applicable to Federal government and to city; but the state is the place to begin. Now the Republican party is more and more committed to Fed-

eralism. National issues, national power, are its whole strength, and it aims more and more to draw all local questions to Washington. The old, fundamental, Democratic principle has always been state independence. In the early days the principle was too strong anyway. I should have been a Republican then. Now the danger is wholly in the opposite direction — and I am a Democrat."

Viola nodded. She was listening eagerly and Porter could not help noticing the thoughtful, earnest beauty of her face. "I see," she said. "And now — You began about the legislature."

"Just so," he resumed. "When our government — state and Federal — was made, everybody was in fear, first of all, of one man power and the tyranny of the executive. 'Separate the executive and legislative powers,' was the cry. But the executive and the legislative cannot move separately on parallel lines. Unless they can be made to work in concert, one will infallibly dominate. Consequently all governing was left practically to the legislature. What does that mean? A mob of two or three hundred men comes together, without leadership, without definite plan of action, each jealous of the others, each bound to act first and foremost for his constituents and to see that their interests do not suffer, no matter what happens to others. In all that multitude there is absolutely no one who represents the state as a whole, no

one whose sole duty it is to see that a proper balance is kept between all these jarring interests and that no one section is sacrificed or disregarded for the benefit of others. Take the most elementary point of all, the finances. Everybody in the legislature is interested to spend. Nobody to save. Every member has some special appropriation to get through for his own district. So long as that goes, he does not care what other members spend. Nay, if they will vote for his measure, he will vote for theirs. Doesn't it seem the first suggestion of common sense that there should be some vigilant, authoritative officer at the head of the whole department of finance, who should be present at the legislative debates, should consider and formulate the claims of conflicting interests, should adjust them in suitable proportion to means of supply, and then submit the whole in a systematic budget for public discussion, criticism, and the approval of the entire legislative body in open session? Am I clear?"

"Perfectly," Viola agreed. "It seems strange that any one should ever have attempted to do business in any other way."

"It would seem strange, if we did not understand exactly how the system arose and did not know that mankind go on doing as their fathers did, no matter how strange the inconsistencies or how obviously absurd."

"And it is here that your reform comes in?" asked the patient listener, showing the intensity

of her interest in the fixity of her attitude and of her eyes.

"Not in the finances alone. In everything I want the governor to govern. Let him choose his own executive subordinates, cabinet, secretaries, whatever you like to call them, let them be each at the head of his own department, and let the power and the responsibility of government be upon them, not upon a disorderly, chaotic mob."

"But," objected Viola, "you spoke of one man power just now. After all, isn't this rather near it? Perhaps you will think me too ignorant to make objections."

"If you don't, how should we ever understand each other?" Porter answered gently. And what impressed Viola all through the interview was his gentleness. Although he was talking of the deepest interests of his life and his manner showed it, yet there was no raising of the voice, no vehemence, no gesticulation. He was always instantly ready to wait for her objections, patient in listening to them, clear in explaining his point of view.

"People do not understand," he went on, "that the only way you can get anything done in this world is by one man power. One man power is the greatest agency known to humanity. Only, like steam, or electricity, or any other natural force, it must be controlled. What is the true means of controlling it? Responsibility. Put your governor at the head of your

government. Then elect your legislature to watch him. Let him, or his representatives, appear before it. Let every measure be explained and elucidated by public debate, so that the people may see and know at every moment what is being done. You can give any amount of power, so that you couple it with an equal public responsibility. The dread of one man power has always driven men to the other extreme of legislative government, and what has it ended in — logically? In the despotism of Cæsar, the despotism of the Medici, the despotism of Cromwell, the despotism of Napoleon. What has it ended in in this country? Government by committees and commissions, three men power, five men power, a dozen men power, that is to say, generally one man power, and all in the dark, with no responsibility whatever. What is bossism, an irresponsible despotism, if ever there was one, but the result of the rabid fear of one man power, that fear naturally embodying itself in the chaos of legislative government? Power and open public responsibility combined — that is what I am working for."

At this point Viola stopped him again. The quickness and clearness of her comments made him feel how perfectly she was following him. "Wouldn't this be a very radical change — almost revolutionary?"

"No, no," he answered, "not at all. In the Federal government, if we were dealing with that, it would not require even a constitutional

amendment — simply an act of Congress. One of our strongest arguments is that the matter was brought before the Senate a number of years ago in the Pendleton bill, and the committee to which it was referred — half Democrats and half Republicans — reported unanimously in favour of it. On this account it might seem easier to begin at Washington; but the national government is too big, too far away from the people. State affairs are simpler, easier to handle; yet at the same time they enter far more immediately into every man's daily life. For this reason the state governments need to be emphasized, to be brought into public view, far more than they are. And for myself, if there is really to be a great reform, I want to see Massachusetts take the lead in it."

"But in Massachusetts there would have to be a constitutional change?" she asked again.

"Yes, but that is comparatively simple. The first and main thing would be to get rid of the governor's council, a little legislature, neither useful nor ornamental, hanging about the neck of the executive and strangling him, like the old man of the sea. Here again I am not presumptuously urging my own opinion. Two of the wisest and most practical governors Massachusetts ever had, Long, a Republican, and Russell, a Democrat, urged the abolition of the council a number of years ago."

He paused and Viola, too, was silent think-

ing. This was a new world to her and full of perplexing and also exciting possibilities.

"The governor," she began at length, "doesn't he have a good deal to do already? At least the papers seem to be full of his speeches and goings on."

"Oh, yes, he sends messages to the legislature, to which the legislature, in most cases, pays as much attention as if they came from you or me. And if he is really interested in the public good, he works hard with the other lobbyists to get his measures in by the back door. And he makes speeches at dedications and dinners. He might do a good deal less of that sort of thing and let some one else do that less for him — the lieutenant-governor, for instance. The people would quickly forgive him, if they knew his time was being spent more usefully. Besides, he would have his cabinet secretaries to attend to details and would himself only shape and engineer the general policy. The Prime Minister in England certainly does quite as much public speaking as is necessary."

"Ah, yes," said Viola, "I thought of that before. I know so little about these things. Still one has read Trollope's novels. Isn't your idea a good deal like the English? Will not some people object to it on that account?"

"I don't deny the resemblance or that Mr. Marston first took the idea from the English system. But conditions here are so different that it would work out very differently. Be-

sides, is there any one so foolish as to be unwilling to take a good idea, even from those he may not like?"

Viola smiled. "I have been brought up to think that your friends the people are foolish." Then she went on more seriously: "But in England, as I understand it, everything depends on a Parliamentary majority. How would you manage that? The governor couldn't very well go out, could he?"

"He might, if it were necessary, change his secretaries; but that isn't my idea of it. I believe that our system is better than the English just because of its stability. Suppose the governor and his cabinet initiate a piece of legislation and find a majority of the legislature dead against them. They push the matter as far as they can, debate it thoroughly, get the public mind full of it, make it perfectly clear whether the opposition is merely factious or represents a general popular feeling. Then if they are voted down, they must withdraw their measure and content themselves with routine business for the remainder of the session. But in the meantime the issue is brought squarely and clearly before the people, and after plenty of leisure for careful consideration, the next election settles it. That is the way I feel that it will work; but of course it is an experiment; an experiment with almost all the chances in favour of success, but still undeniably an experiment. Yet, oh, Miss Bucking-

ham" — and now she felt that he dropped his cooler, argumentative tone and gave freer way to the enthusiasm that was in him. His clear gray eye opened wider, his head straightened. "Oh, Miss Buckingham, what an experiment! You see the root, the secret of the whole thing, is that it develops leaders, brings forward manhood and gives it a chance. Our present system of doing everything in dark committee-rooms and lobbies evolves two sorts of men: the cunning, clever, intriguing, unprincipled wire-puller who has the real power; and the amiable, sweet-spoken, empty dummy who comes to the front, wears the frock coat, and does as he is told. Every one complains that good men don't go into politics. Why don't they go into politics? Because of a system which sets a premium on rascality and makes it next to impossible to be successful and honest both. Responsibility is so divided that the good strong man must share all his glory with the weak and wicked and shoulder the blame of all their follies and all their crimes. My plan, if it works, will first of all make such an opening for men that the ablest men in the country will find their place in politics instead of in Wall Street. The thousands of rich young fellows who are dissipating their time for want of a suitable object in life, will have a career that is worthy of them. There will be a chance not only in the government, in the administration, but just as much in the opposition, where the

keenest and most active minds in the state will be gathered together to watch and criticize every step that the executive takes and to do battle in the legislative arena for a chance to take office and frame measures in their turn. It sounds worth trying, doesn't it?"

Viola had listened with an ardour answering his own, carried away as much by his passionate energy as by the power of his ideas. These appealed to her immensely, yet something of the old scepticism was not all uprooted yet. "It has a glorious, trumpet sound, as you put it," she said. "But forgive me my old habits of thought, these leaders won't be demagogues, will they, won't cater to the lowest popular passions for their own ends?"

His answer showed no irritation and no violence. "Ah, there is the point," he said. "Who can tell? It all depends on how much you believe in the people, in their good disposition and their intelligence. That they want honest government who can question? Why should the mass of them want anything else? That they should understand all the technical merits of abstract political problems is absurd to expect. The one real question is, can they, in the long run, judge the character of men? I believe, with Lincoln, that they can. At any rate, the plan which I propose, which will bring men to the front instead of smothering them, is the only thing that offers for salvation. Corruption on the one hand, despotic centralization

on the other, threaten between them to strangle popular government in this country. The wisest observers tend to agree on that and tend also to agree in general that popular government is a failure. I believe that it has never yet had a chance, and that as long as the legislature is allowed full swing, it never will have a chance. Let the executive govern, with complete responsibility to a watchful legislature debating openly before the public, and I believe that the people and popular government will justify themselves. Now you see what I am aiming at."

She looked at him with thought and wonder and sympathy in her eyes and it was long before she spoke. "To go into politics in that way means something," she said at last. "Such an idea is worth the ambition of a life."

"I am ambitious," he said quietly. "I don't deny it. I want fame, I want power, I want success. I like all these things. Who doesn't? At the same time, if I know myself, I wouldn't go near politics, as they are to-day, simply for these things, unless I had some higher idea that would make it worth while. If I am right, if my theories are what I think they are, what other wise men, Marston, for instance, have thought they are, success means the governorship, it means making Massachusetts the leading state of the Union, it means a reform the consequences of which may be felt for generations. You think I brag. I don't

say I can do this. It is all in the 'if.' I may be a wild crank, you know, like so many others."

"You are no crank, certainly," she answered, with all her quiet earnestness. "I can't tell you how much you have interested me, Mr. Porter. You have opened a new world. Of course it is new, and I am of a sceptical disposition. You will understand that. I want to work it out by myself and read a great deal and ask a great many more questions. I want to make myself mistress of the whole subject. Why can't I?"

"Most assuredly you can," said Porter, delighted.

"And books?" she asked.

Then he gave her a list of what writings there were with a bearing on the subject. "But it's all in 'Power and Responsibility,' by my friend Marston's father," he said. "He thought it all out and developed it, only he was no politician to put it into practice. 'Power and Responsibility' is the Bible of the whole matter. Study that thoroughly and you will know as much as I."

So he took his leave and she let him go, with renewed thanks; for she wanted to think over all she had heard.

Porter did some thinking, too. It was odd that a woman — and of all women this woman — should wake up to the bare, abstract idea with an interest which hardly any one had ever shown before. Margaret — she was clear-

headed enough, doubtless, could have understood, if she had wished; but she had never wished, had always treated the whole thing with indifference and contempt.

CHAPTER XVIII

MEANWHILE work was going steadily on — for Porter and against him. Everywhere his personal popularity increased. He made many friends and few enemies. Smith was as loyal as ever and as energetic as ever. Rooney continued faithful, not wholly from self-interest. And his devotion was much strengthened by one or two talks with Maloney, the chief of the Boston Democracy.

"Porter's a big man, I guess," said Rooney.

"Oh, he's all right," Maloney answered.

"Of course," continued his follower apologetically, "he's got to talk for clean politics. That's his long suit."

"Let him talk. If his talk is straight, then he's the kind of calf that needs more rope. Give him enough and he'll hang himself. If he sets out to clean up the state-house, he'll be too busy to meddle with us. Besides, he ain't elected yet. Anyway, he's against Hinckley. That's all I want. Any old knife is good enough for me to stick into Hinckley."

Hinckley was against Porter. There was no doubt about that. The chairman of the state committee can pull a good many wires and he

was pulling them. Burke was no great help to him, however. Burke was unwilling to play false, yet he was anxious to win. He hummed and hawed over the means. But Hinckley had only to dangle the end seductively before his victim's nose and he would follow his leader into almost anything. The process had to be repeated so often, however, that even the patient Hinckley cursed inwardly and was daily on the lookout for some more promising candidate. And Burke, dull as he was, could not help suspecting this at times.

"I'd like to get Burke," said Smith frequently to Porter. "As I've said before, he wouldn't be much good to us, but he's some harm against us. I'd like to get him or put him out."

"Put him out?" repeated Rooney, who happened to be listening on one of these occasions.

Porter's henchman Warren was still busy, doing detective work and all other kinds of work that might be useful, and he and Rooney found each other exceedingly congenial. Rooney took the first occasion to pass on Smith's remark.

"Put Burke out?" repeated Warren thoughtfully in his turn. "Well, now, I think that might be done."

So together the two practical politicians worked up a little scheme which struck them as extremely ingenious. It happened that in Burke's earlier, good-natured, amorous Irish

career, not so very long after his marriage, there had been one of those scandals which respectable Boston can least tolerate. It had been hushed up at the time and now was so completely forgotten that nothing less than Warren's indefatigable researches would ever have succeeded in reviving it.

"I guess that's about the thing," he said, as he communicated it to his confederate.

"Say," answered Rooney, "that'll put him out all right, but will Porter stand for it?"

"Stand for nothing. Not much. I won't ask him."

"But afterwards?"

"Afterwards? What's that got to do with it? Afterwards don't count."

"All the same, he'll talk some."

Warren shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, yes, he'll talk. He's got to. It's all in the game."

The next thing was to concoct a newspaper story that would be effective and yet safe. But Warren understood the art and knew others who understood it better. All that was necessary was a very formal and very dignified editorial discussing the difficulty of finding a candidate who should be perfect in every respect. For instance, you might have a man — of straw in this case — who should be of an old and respected family, looked up to and honoured everywhere in the community; but he might be distant, unconciliating, people would mistrust him and hold back from him simply on

account of his haughty manner. And one or two purely imaginary instances of snub would give this fictitious individual all necessary concreteness. Another — Porter, of course, would be understood — might have tact, magnetism, personal charm, might be in himself all that would gather votes by the basketful; but he might have ideas, and as is well known, there is always a class of Democrats and Republicans both, to whom ideas in politics are as poisonous as lobster and milk. Again, there might be a third who should have no ideas and no high-class manners, a jolly good fellow whom everybody liked to crack a joke and take a drink with; but such a man was sure to have something in his past that could be raked up against him. Suppose, etc., etc.

A good sermon on this text would do, thought Warren, and so thought the obliging editor of the *Argus,* whose one object in life, for reasons best known to himself, was to get a slap at Hinckley.

"Safe, I think?" said Warren.

"Safe enough," said the editor. "What could Burke do that would not make matters a great deal worse? Safe to queer him, too, I should say. But will Porter like it?"

"He'll let on he doesn't like it. But just keep it dark. When Burke's out of the way, Porter'll feel better all the same. Every word's true, you know."

So the Sunday edition of that lurid sheet,

the *Argus,* was to be enlivened with a lot of well-seasoned scandal, and Warren found himself exceedingly contented.

Saturday afternoon, however, Smith came into Porter's office. "Say, what's this about Burke?"

"Burke?" asked the chief. "What is it?"

"Rooney was full last night — or lively at any rate — and he told a man who told me that the *Argus* was going to put a bomb under Burke to-morrow that would blow him clear out of the state."

"The *Argus?*" repeated Porter in disgust. "What has the *Argus* to do with it anyway?"

"Search me," answered the leader of labour.

Porter stepped to the telephone and tried to get Rooney. No Rooney to be found. Then Warren, with equal unsuccess.

He took up his hat. "I'm off for the *Argus,*" he said. "This will bear looking into."

"Perhaps I'd better have left it alone," Smith suggested.

"Hardly. When I want the *Argus* to run my campaign, I'll let them know it."

The announcement of Porter's name was not received by the editor with cheerfulness. Says the Chinese proverb, "There are thirty-five resources in a difficulty; but the best is to run away." The editor would have liked to run away; but he couldn't. So he ordered his visitor shown in.

"Good afternoon," said Porter.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Porter," said the editor. He was a suave little man and though he was miserably unequal to the occasion, he tried hard not to appear so.

"I have been told, probably incorrectly —" Porter went on, "that you were to print an article about Mr. Burke. All things considered, I think I am justified in asking to see it."

The editor got up on his dignity, although even then he seemed much shorter than his interlocutor. "Really, Mr. Porter, it is a little odd, you know."

"I can't help that. Do you refuse to let me see it?"

"Hm! Ha! Professional secrecy —" but the smile that went with the joke was watery.

"Because, if you do," Porter continued, without any smile, watery or otherwise, "and if the article is such as I do not approve of, I shall take occasion Monday morning in the *Intelligencer* not only to disclaim any connection with the piece, but to express my opinion of the man who wrote it and the paper that printed it. Will you let me see it?"

"Oh, well," said the editor apologetically, "it isn't worth making so much fuss about. There it is." He took the proof from a pigeonhole and handed it over.

Porter glanced through it. Then put it in his pocket. "Who is responsible for this?" he asked, as calm as usual.

"Really now," began the editor, again rebellious.

But he was interrupted short. "Never mind that. I know where it came from. Of course it stops here. Just see to it, will you?"

This time the editor was genuinely indignant. "Come, Mr. Porter, you can't run things quite like that, you know."

"Oh, yes, I can. I'll wait here while you give the order, before you forget it. And that must be final, you understand. If the thing should go any further, I shall do exactly what I said, and you wouldn't like it. You've quarreled with Hinckley and you can't afford to quarrel with me."

Reluctantly the badgered journalist held a brief colloquy with his subordinates, while Porter turned away for the moment and looked out of the window.

Just then a whirlwind tore into the office in the shape of Burke. Taking no notice of Porter, he rushed up to the editor's desk. "See here. They tell me you're going to print a libel about me. If you do, I'll horsewhip you till you can't stand."

"We print no libels," said the editor.

"Damn the word. You know what I mean."

"We *were* going to print a little story, which might refer to you — or somebody else." The editor was really enjoying himself, for the first time that afternoon.

"Were going to?" repeated Burke, wilting.

"Were going to. It's off now. There's the gentleman you'll have to thank." The editor rode on this dramatic situation, like a gull on the crest of a wave.

Burke turned and saw Porter for the first time. "By God, Porter!" he cried, rushing up to him and grasping his hand. "I sha'n't forget this. It's no use to fight you. I've seen it all along. Hinckley may do his dirty work for himself, if he likes."

Then he slipped his arm through his benefactor's, and the two left the office together, not even condescending to nod a good-bye to the blighted editor. That dignitary stared as they departed. "Well," he said to himself, "Porter's beastly lucky. There's no denying it. To be sure, he might have put up this whole job, the way it's worked; but I don't think. Oh, won't he give it to Joe Warren!"

As the two reconciled rivals walked away, Burke explained, in a torrent of words, that he was about ready to have done with Hinckley in any case. The chairman's conduct had been queer all along and lately it had seemed pretty evident that his ardour for a Burke ticket was cooling off. "He's got hold of Dillworthy, I believe. Dillworthy has money and that's all Hinckley thinks about. I'm done with him. And I'm all ready to take hold for you, Porter. I can see you're the coming man, and what's more, I believe Hinckley sees it; only he hates you like poison. And look here, this business

to-day has fixed me. It — it — well, it's one of those things a man likes to forget, you know. Every man's got a lot of 'em about him somewhere. Hey?"

Porter agreed heartily with this sentiment and perhaps a shade less heartily accepted his companion's enthusiastic offers of support, Burke being the sort of person who is more useful when he appreciates that you can get along without him.

Later Porter said a few short, sharp words to Rooney and Warren. Rooney was used to that kind of thing and rather liked it, certainly admired and respected his leader all the more for it. But Warren had been suffering of late from brain enlargement. The failure of his stratagem had already left him sore. He took his medicine in silence; but he did not like it. "I've got my lesson," he said to himself, "and got it good. Help a man along and see what you get for it. You're all right, Mat, but I guess Joe Warren's all right, too. In future we'll be a little more careful of number one."

CHAPTER XIX

On the fifteenth of May "Mosquitos" was produced at the Bay State Theatre. The audience, largely composed of Flitters's friends, was very select, very gay, and very enthusiastic. Viola and her circle, including Porter, had seats together in the middle of the orchestra and led the applause on all occasions appropriate and inappropriate.

McCarthy conducted and the performance was a success from the beginning of the overture. "How could that common little creature catch Flitters's spirit so perfectly?" asked the spectators one of another. But he had caught it. The music was indescribably gay, light, swift, charged with rollicking humour, yet not overcharged. And the libretto, farcical and extravagant in design, was full of airy fancy and poetical grace in the execution.

In the first act the hero, an irresponsible creature of a charming disposition, more sinned against than sinning, is in the full tide of his tenth, or twentieth, or what-not, wooing, when the ghost of his past comes upon him, in the shape of one *fiancée* after another, deserted and forgotten, now gathering together, from all

quarters of the globe, to exact retribution. For awhile, being ingenious as well as ingenuous, he manages to play them off against each other, finally engaging the whole company in a colossal quarrel, which gives him a chance to steal away to his latest love, and so ends the act.

When the act-drop fell, there was, of course, an immense, unanimous outcry for the authors, whereupon Flitters appeared, easy and natural as ever, towing the reluctant and unhappy McCarthy in his wake. "Speech! Speech!" shouted the eager throng in boxes, orchestra, and balconies. Flitters looked at his companion. "It's up to you," he suggested, quite audibly and greatly to the increase of the general gaiety. McCarthy's only response was an obvious start in the direction of the wings. But Flitters had him securely gripped. "Tongue-tied, you see," said the tormentor, shrugging his shoulders; "but I can tell you just what he would like to say. 'Ladies and gentlemen, this is a momentous occasion. You seem to think I've done well, and I think I have myself — remarkably. By nature I'm a dreamer. If I write the music I like to write, it is serious, passionate, yearning, way up in the clouds, in short. But really my musical gift is astonishing, inexplicable. It wells right out of me, like the pure, crystal springs of Helicon, so clear, so calm, that it reflects every light and shade and colour that comes near it. This time I'm yoked up with

a fool, who laughs in season and out of season. And his laughter has crept into my music without my even knowing it. It dances in my violins, and whistles in my flutes, and tinkles in my triangles. Without being a laugher or a fool myself I've caught the spirit of the laugher and the fool and done his work better than he could do it, because music is a divine art and as our cousin Shakespeare says, "the words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo." Good luck to you, ladies and gentlemen.'" The speaker and his victim slipped out of sight to a burst of applause heartier than had greeted them when they entered.

Porter and Viola, sitting side by side, had joined in the applause with all due energy. "Somehow you must find yourself a little out of place in all this?" Viola suggested.

"Do I appear so? A skeleton at the feast?"

"No, no, of course not. You seem to enjoy yourself very well."

"So I do. I don't know that it is quite the atmosphere I was brought up in — probably to my misfortune."

"You didn't go to the theatre as a child?"

"No. My father was a minister. I don't know that he would actually have disapproved of it. But it didn't come in my way. My sister never went till she was thirty — and was sorry she did then, I think, though I've tempted her occasionally since."

"I should like to know your sister." And, as he did not immediately reply, Viola went on: "You think she wouldn't like to know me?"

"I was thinking whether she would," he answered, with engaging frankness, "and deciding in the affirmative. But —"

"But you doubt whether she would like to know George?"

"It would take her a long time to get used to George certainly."

They listened for a moment in silence to the buzz and chatter all around them. "Oh," began Viola again, "I've heard all about Mr. Burke. I congratulate you."

"Thanks," answered Porter, laughing. "But isn't that altogether too serious a subject for the occasion?"

"You and I shall never wholly escape from our seriousness, I think. We may love the laughers and harken after them, but we can never quite step from our world into theirs. At any rate, I've been nothing but serious lately. I've read 'Power and Responsibility' and I'm going to read it over again after I've read the other things you mentioned. I'm a convert — I need hardly say that — such a valuable one I must be. I believe in the idea and I may even come to believe in the people. Think of it! Isn't it humiliating? But there are a great many questions I want to ask and I can't ask them here, can I? Come and see me some evening and straighten it all out."

"What sort of questions?" he inquired. But just then the orchestra prefaced the lift of the curtain with a hint of that mosquito dance music which was to be the crowning charm of the whole, and which had peeped and peered in odd places all through, always vanishing before the ear could grasp it in any satisfying entirety.

The second act went quite as gaily and successfully as the first. It appears that the most recent object of the hero's affection has another lover whose jealousy prompts him to make an investigation, which leads to unfortunate results. After manifold vicissitudes, the hero's monstrous improprieties are discovered and his latest flame throws him off with withering scorn and returns to her former lover's arms. This relentless person suggests snowing the hero under with some three dozen breach of promise suits; but the chorus, grown reminiscently tender, begs him off on condition that he will agree to marry his first victim, who is by this time very old, very stout, and very plain. If he deceives her, they, mosquito-like, will torment him to death. And to show him how, they dance, and buzz, and whirl about him, faster and faster and ever faster, one bright, dazzling, perpetual whirl, till the curtain falls upon a mass of shifting colours and gauzy wings and a general riot of inextinguishable merriment.

After the performance Viola's flock returned to sup with her, and Flitters and McCarthy joined them as soon as it was possible to escape

from the enthusiastic congratulations of innumerable friends. The supper was gay and merry beyond even ordinary gaiety and merriment. Flitters was evidently delighted with his success, yet oddly enough, although he was full of jest and pleasantry, his jests were quieter and more delicate than usual. There was nothing boisterous about him, nothing noisy, nothing of over-elation or vulgar triumph. Between him and Flora and Laura it was a perpetual, dazzling interchange of repartee, like the rush of sparks in a broken circuit; as he himself said of it, "brilliant in the passage, but a mere inflammation of nothing." Poor Constance Weber could only listen, poor, dull, beautiful Constance, who, as Flitters suggested — not to her — must have been inoculated for jokes in her infancy. The less she understood, the more she was fascinated, as was perhaps natural. Indeed, it was curious and almost pitiful to watch the charm which Flitters had come to have for her. She played his songs — in her wooden way. She repeated his jests — with the point lost utterly. She had eyes and ears for no one else, when he was in the room.

"You'd better look out," said Flora to him, "there's a grand passion brewing there."

"For me? Nonsense. You might as well have a passion for a bunch of crackers or a firefly. Nobody would ever care for me seriously, nor I for any one. She likes to hear me talk, because — between ourselves — it isn't

very flattering — she doesn't understand a word I say. Some day she will and then her toy balloon will burst."

The other author of "Mosquitos" was also basking in female favour in a quieter way. Ruth's admiration was less foolishly obvious than Constance's; but it was more than evident to a keen observer like Wingate, whose wits were sharpened by jealousy. And McCarthy's way of taking it was a curious study. Probably it was agreeable to him. Certainly it was. Little things showed that clearly enough. But he seemed as humble and deferential in his mode of addressing her, as if she were a superior being to whom he hardly dared raise his eyes. All the talking between them was done by her. His response was only an occasional monosyllable, and that not always apt.

"I don't see how it all comes to you, Eugene. How does it?"

"Why —"

"And you don't even know. Are all sorts of beautiful airs running through your head all the time? — in church? — and at the dentist's? Do you wake up with a waltz in your ears and go to sleep to a fairies' song?"

McCarthy laughed a little.

"Do you? Do you?"

"Sometimes."

"Why can't you teach it to the rest of us? Perhaps one could catch it, if one lived with

you. But there must be awkward times. For instance, at a funeral, if one were to hear dance music, wild dance music, nothing but dance music. But one wouldn't mind those little awkwardnesses. I shouldn't, if such things would only come to me; but they don't. Yet I love music. I don't believe you love music any more than I do. It's just gift. Why, music, when you play for instance, makes me throb and quiver and tingle all over. I forget myself and where I am and what I'm doing and what other people are doing. . . . "

So she talked in her rhapsodic way, her voice just a little husky from enthusiasm — and scarlet fever. And he ate ices and little cakes and drank champagne — rather greedily — and listened and wondered. And Wingate, looking on, wondered, too — at the woman's sympathetic imagination which could penetrate such a rough husk to the genius underneath.

Then, at the end of supper, a few speeches were made. Porter praised the delicacy and originality of the opera with more appreciation than either Viola or Flitters would have given him credit for. "Hear! Hear!" cried the latter. "You're really making progress." Wingate ventured some comments on the personality of the authors, regretting the well-known modesty of both of them, which would doubtless prevent any adequate recognition on their part of the importance of the occasion. "Nevertheless," he said, "we can't let them go without

any response to our curiosity. I call upon Mr. McCarthy for remarks."

"McCarthy! McCarthy! Speech! Speech!" shouted the company.

McCarthy found himself on his legs, supported by Flitters on one side and by Flora on the other; but the speech didn't come. "Ladies and gentlemen," he gasped — "Ladies and gentlemen — I — Oh, bring me my violin."

They brought him his violin and then he spoke, gave them a quick summary of the opera, caught little threads of airs from the tangle which was swaying in everybody's memory, drew them out, flashed them clear a moment, then let them melt into others of contrasted sweetness. It was difficult to tell which to admire most, the ease of the performance or the perfection of it; and Ruth was not the only one who throbbed and quivered under it like the strings of the violin itself.

When the long applause was over, Flitters rose. "I protest," he said. "I have no weapons. What can an unarmed man do against such a display as that? But I haven't a trace of envy in my composition. I can't play the fiddle like my friend here; but I really believe I have more wit than he has. Yet, after all, I don't know. What has my wit ever done for me? I'm not likely to be governor. I'm not likely even to own a big yellow newspaper. No woman has ever fallen in love with me. No woman ever will. To get those things you don't

want wit. You want a great belief in yourself and the habit of making people think you believe in them. Now I think governors are a hollow sham, all except my friend Sancho Panza. I think proprietors of great newspapers are an unmitigated evil. And the love of woman — the love of woman — I won't tell you what I think of that — I daren't. Then the man who goes after such things must live in the future. What is the future? A bubble, a cloud, a shadow, nothing, more ghostly even than the past. Give me the present, a sunny corner by an old wall, with bees murmuring and ripe blackberries ready to drop into my mouth. The present is always like that, if you have wit enough to make it so. Eugene, my friend, play us the sunny corner by the wall."

Eugene played it. Then they all went home very quietly.

Viola detained Wingate a few moments. "Frank," she said, "you may think it a ridiculous time; but I haven't seen you much lately. I want to ask you about Mr. Porter's campaign."

Wingate expressed himself enthusiastically as to the man and as to his ideas.

"But the prospect of success?" Viola persisted.

"Ah, the prospect of success. Well, Hinckley's a hard one to beat for the nomination, and after that the Republicans have a solid grip on

the state. But Porter will give them a good fight."

"Money?" she asked.

"Money? Is never too aboundant for anything in this world. But I am doing fairly well with it. We don't need any to speak of yet. The call will come by and by."

"I want to help, Frank. You know money is almost too abundant with me. A thousand dollars — five thousand —. It seems to me worth while."

Wingate looked at her a little astonished. "What does this mean, Viola? You know what you've always said about politics. You, an aristocrat, you, an artist, you, a cynic, take an active interest in a Democratic campaign?"

"I've learned some things," she answered, briefly, but not shortly. "I don't think I ever was a cynic. I'm not sure but Mr. Porter's campaign is a work of art, of a large kind — of genius, at any rate. He has interested me in it. I've read a good deal in the last few weeks. Shall you want the money, Frank?"

"Certainly we shall want the money."

"There's another thing," went on the eager convert. "Those letters of Dudley's, if they are Dudley's — they are impertinent. They ought to be answered!"

Wingate laughed. "They're part of the game. Haven't you seen our editorials about them?"

"Yes, I've seen them. They're very, very mild, Frank."

Frank shrugged his shoulders. "We have to be mild."

"Well, never mind Dudley's letters. But there ought to be some direct, strong writing on Mr. Porter's side."

"I imagine he means to take the thing up later himself."

"Probably he will," said Viola. "But it would be better for some one else." She paused a moment. "Frank, if I write a letter, will you print it and keep my secret?"

Wingate's brown eyes filled with laughter. "You write a letter?"

But she answered, without disturbance: "I. I've written more or less, at one time or another, for different periodicals, fairly successfully. I'm full of this subject now, you hardly realize how full. When I take hold of a thing, I take hold of it thoroughly. I don't take hold of many. Of course you won't print it, if you don't like it when it's done."

By this time Wingate had recovered consciousness. "Like it?" he said. "I'll risk liking it. It's a magnificent idea. I know how you take hold of things. Do it at once. And we'll print it at once. In a way that will make it tell, too."

She shook her head. "Not at once. I'm not ready yet — may never be. But I'm coming to it."

Then, as it was after two o'clock, Wingate took his leave, more impressed than ever with Porter's gift for winning things and people.

CHAPTER XX

The Commonweal Club was holding its monthly dinner and Porter had been invited to speak. It was an organization of eminent dignity and respectability and of dulness corresponding. Its politics were nominally independent, practically very conservative, not to say Republican. Grave merchants, lawyers, physicians, etc., nodded their heads over a frugal repast and imagined that the intellectual nourishment must be exquisite because the material was not. Celebrities in *esse* and more particularly in *posse,* as being cheaper, were invited to come and talk out the price of their dinner. Afterwards, members of the club who had nothing to say said it at considerable length and were tolerated by other members in the hope that their turn would arrive by and by, while the celebrities industriously looked pleasant and wished with all their hearts they were somewhere else.

Before the banquet Porter stood up with the president and the other celebrities, and was introduced to various personages, important and otherwise. Heath strolled by among the rest; and the bystanders, who knew something of

past and present rivalries, watched the meeting curiously. But there was nothing worth watching. Both men were hardened to publicity and knew how to meet it. They shook hands with entire apparent friendliness.

"Glad to see you here," said Heath. "Going to give us some light on things, I understand. We need it."

"That's a healthy view to take," answered his adversary, smiling. "I wish every one was as open-minded as you appear to be."

"Oh, yes, I'm open-minded. There's no doubt about that — open-minded, open-handed, open-hearted. That fits me exactly."

Then the company went out to dinner. Porter sat between the president and a congressman from the far west, whose whole soul was absorbed in irrigation. He talked irrigation and nothing else; but Porter listened and questioned with such dexterous tact that later the western congressman swore he had not seen a more up-to-date man in all New England, and that if he was nominated for governor, the Republicans would have to hustle for it. On the other side the president came to much the same conclusion, though he certainly would not have proclaimed it with so much vehemence. Neither of them could have told just why Porter impressed them; but he did.

The speaking of the evening was supposed to be concerned with general possibilities of governmental reform. The first celebrity be-

lieved that nothing great or permanent could be accomplished unless the best men of the country would go into politics. This idea, which was perhaps not wholly original, the celebrity propounded, in ornate and flowing periods, for upwards of three-quarters of an hour; but as he made no suggestion as to how the best men could be got into politics, his oratory was considered by some to be more fluent than satisfying.

The next speaker was Porter's neighbour, the western congressman. At the first glance it might seem difficult to connect governmental reform with irrigation. But, after all, irrigation suggests running water, which suggests purity, which by contrast suggests government in the United States. By this process, or some other, the western congressman arrived at his pet hobby, and discussed it for half an hour, greatly to his own contentment.

Then Porter. He spoke very quietly and simply, without any of the rhetoric which had been employed by the other celebrities; yet somehow his hearers stopped wriggling in their chairs and sat up and listened. He was interested, he said, as perhaps some of them knew, in a considerable scheme of governmental reform, and this, as he believed, would go far to get rid of many of the evils which of late years had scandalized all lovers of free government and of their country. There was not sufficient time and perhaps this was not the place to de-

velop the full nature of his scheme, which he should hope later to place before them and all the voters of the state in a tangible and definite form. For this evening he wished to confine himself to the most fundamental and essential element in his position, the importance of state government. He then went on to show how in the beginning the state governments were too strong and the Federal too weak and how for a long time the country suffered from this lack of balance. Then gradually a change took place. National feeling developed. Improved means of communication broke up the old provincialism. Finally the Civil War made it a sort of treason to look upon the states as anything but mere local divisions wholly subordinate to the government at Washington, and in every direction that government was now taking enormous strides towards complete and entire control. But, the speaker urged, this could not be brought about without a radical change in our system. The whole machinery of local administration and civil life was constitutionally managed by the states. Yet it was impossible to get people to take any serious interest in state elections or in the doings of the state legislatures, which were daily settling — or unsettling — questions most vital to the welfare of every citizen of the community.

"Do you realize, gentlemen," he went on, speaking straight and strong, with passionate earnestness, "how many, I might say most, of

our practical, energetic men, have an obscure, unconscious feeling that the state governments are merely a fossilized survival, an encumbrance to the great sweep of progress, an ingenious device for doubling the expense of administration and halving its efficiency? Gentlemen, if this is really true, necessarily true, the state governments must go, and let them go. Let us have our laws made for us in Washington, the laws that marry us and bury us, the laws that regulate our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, the disposition of our fortunes and the training of our children. Let congressmen from California — no offence intended to our friend here — decide what shall be read in our schools, and congressmen from Louisiana discuss what shall be permitted in our churches. Better to have it openly thus than to have Massachusetts elections turning on the tariff, while all the thousandfold more important issues are smothered in dark lobbies and committee-rooms. But, for myself, gentlemen, I am for Massachusetts — I won't say, first. There can never again be question of that. But I am for Massachusetts. Let us send our congressmen to Washington — some of them very gladly — to do their duty there. But let us attend to our own affairs at home. Here, on our green New England hills, in our rocky pastures by the sea, where the Pilgrims first took refuge in the name of liberty and holy living, let us look to it that the descendants are worthy of their ancestors;

and when at our solemn festivals we use the consecrated formula, 'God Save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,' let us assure ourselves the consciousness that we have done our part to make a commonwealth worth saving. We cannot do a greater service to our countrymen of California and Texas, to the United States, or to the world."

The interest aroused by the beginning of this speech continued and increased until the end. The applause was long and hearty and many of those present afterwards complimented Porter and expressed their sympathy with all he had said.

Not the least curious auditor and spectator had been William J. Wood, who had entered about the middle of dinner and found a seat next his nephew. While Porter was speaking a good many eyes had been fixed on Wood's face with eager speculation as to his impressions of his antagonist. But they saw nothing. Those cold, quiet, firm, heavy features behind the fat cigar remained utterly impassive. The Republican chief might have been thinking of his latter end, instead of what was going on about him, for all his face revealed of the matter.

Now that it was over, Heath and Wood rose and made their way towards the celebrities.

"My uncle says he has shaken hands with you before, but thinks you may have forgotten it," began Heath.

"Hardly," Porter answered. And he specified one occasion.

The three talked generalities for a few moments. Then Wood said abruptly, "I hear you're out to smash the Republican party?"

Porter laughed, as did the others within earshot. "I'm not out to smash anything," he answered. "I'm on a machine that's bound to go. Anything that gets in the way may be smashed."

"We'll try not to get in the way," replied Wood, slightly ironical. "But why not smash the Democrats just as well?"

"Some think they don't need it. Then, to tell you the truth, I believe the Republicans are bound to smash themselves. They would have done so long ago. Only just as the Republican head gets within an inch of the Democratic wall, the wall collapses. That's Republican luck."

"Perhaps the luck may hold out awhile longer," Heath suggested.

After this they shifted to safer ground again, and Porter soon took his leave.

Before going home, he looked in for a few moments at Viola's. Since the performance of "Mosquitos," he had passed one long evening with her, and had been amazed to find how thoroughly she had mastered his ideas, how completely she had made them her own. One or two difficult points they had discussed at length with the result of putting some minor details in a new light, even for him. He had

met no one hitherto, man or woman, who had taken the same intelligent interest in the scheme or in whom he had found the same sense of assured support.

To-night, however, she was in the midst of her joyous company. The whirl of laughter and bright thoughts about her was merrier than ever and Porter was astonished to find how readily he entered into it. It seemed a so much more genuine world than the stiff assembly he had just left, so much more sincere, so much more kindly, even more earnest in any valid or enduring sense of the term. Flitters's irony was a more charming thing than William J. Wood's and perhaps quite as useful to mankind in general.

Wingate, who had been at the club, was giving the company some account of Porter's speech when he arrived. "It was just the very thing," Wingate said. "No politics — patriotism — Massachusetts patriotism — good enough for me — and for a good many others. We'll have it all in the *Intelligencer* to-morrow and an editorial that will help it along."

But Flitters would have no more politics just then, and dragged every one of them, even Porter and Viola, into a wild country dance of his own invention, which seemed to disturb the equilibrium of all animate and inanimate things.

Later Porter found a few minutes' peaceful talk with his hostess, who had a question or two to put. When she had all the light she wanted,

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she congratulated him on his speech. "I know from what Frank told us that it was successful," she said. "Of course I knew it would be; but it seems to have been more than of course."

"It was all very pleasant certainly."

"Ah, we are making progress," she continued; and as he smiled at the "we," "I don't do things by halves, you know. My whole heart is in this contest now. I want to see you win."

"I hope you will — I trust so."

"I know I shall. Oh, about Mr. Burke. Is he still faithful?"

"More so than ever," Porter answered. "He's a good fellow — a thoroughly good fellow — so good that I think he'll take the lieutenant-governorship. And, let me tell you, that's a great deal for a man who set out to be governor."

"So it is," she agreed. "And Hinckley?"

"Ah, Hinckley! He's cleverer than all the rest of us put together. And he'll never come round. He's got a strong hold of the machine. If we're beaten, it will be Hinckley's doing."

Viola's great eyes grew dark. "Fight!" she said quietly, but with an intensity that stung. "Fight! How I wish I were a man!"

They were silent for a few moments, Viola absorbed in thought, Porter looking now at her, now at the gay company across the room.

Viola was the first to speak. "I almost wish I were to be in town all summer."

"You are going away?" he asked, and his tone showed anything but satisfaction. "But of course you are. Soon?"

"In a week or two now — to Falmouth. I have a place there. I shall see the papers constantly. And there won't be so much going on through the summer months, I suppose?"

"About the campaign, you mean?" wilfully implying an uncertainty she had left no room for.

"What else should I mean?"

"There won't be much going on on the surface, of course. There will be plenty underneath, I should say."

"Ah, and underneath is just what one likes to see. But I shall come back early in September, at any rate, long before the convention." Then, after a brief pause, she added, "Why won't you run down to Falmouth sometime? Miss Tucker and I keep a house full of friends there all summer."

It was very kind of her certainly. It would be a great pleasure — only he should be so busy. Yes, he thought he could come.

When he reflected afterwards, the idea of her going was distinctly disagreeable. It was not she, it was her atmosphere he should miss. It relaxed his nerves, diverted him, brightened him wonderfully to get out of politics into sunshine and laughter. And then latterly she herself had seemed to understand so well.

CHAPTER XXI

Margaret Ferguson's wedding was fixed for Monday, June fifth, and Porter of course received cards at the proper time. He would have preferred to stay away; but it seemed pluckier and wiser to go.

He went to Foxbridge Saturday night and passed a quiet evening with his sister. She had heard something of Viola, something of Porter's frequent visits to her, something of the gay and worldly set with which those visits must bring him into contact. Clara was not naturally a meddlesome person; but Matthew's career was the one great interest of her life. Was it wise for him to come under influences which might distract him from the serious bent of his lofty purpose? If there was just a trifle of jealousy mingled with her sisterly anxiety, who shall blame her?

Her brother received her gentle inquiries with an equal gentleness. He did not believe anything could turn him from his purpose. He was sure that Miss Buckingham was very far from wishing to do so. Then he explained what an interest she seemed to take, how quick, intelligent, and responsive she was. He wanted

Clara to know her, sometime they two would be brought together.

Clara assented, with a little sigh. If this lady was indeed what Mat thought her, there must be no jealousy, should be none. Every help to him was to be welcomed and encouraged. Yet — yet —

Sunday morning the two went to church. Margaret was not there, but for Porter her image was more overpowering than her real presence would have been. In one sense he did not care for her any longer, not for the living Margaret, not for — Mrs. Heath. But he was a person who did not forget easily. Bits of speech would come to him, turns of phrase, lovely, fading gestures -- all so long past, so far away, yet so intensely vivid that they flamed against the indifferent present like lightning in a black night. Thus it is to be feared that on that morning the comfortable droning of Reverend Mr. Longbreath brought little spiritual profit to one of his hearers, at any rate.

In the afternoon Porter took a long walk with Marston and to him also imparted some of his enthusiasm as to Viola and her value as a proselyte for the cause.

Just after six o'clock, as the brother and sister were sitting down to their simple supper, Porter was called to the telephone.

"Mat," said a voice that almost made him drop the receiver, "Mat, I want to see you. Be at the landing with your canoe to-night —

after dark — eight o'clock or so. Wait till I come."

She rang off before he had time to think of answering and he walked slowly back to his sister, thoughtful, puzzled, bewildered. What did it mean? Why should she — of all people — want to see him — of all people — at that hour? It was indecent, impossible. He would call her up again and tell her so.

But he didn't. When the time came, he got his canoe, and paddled slowly to the appointed spot. It was a warm night, clear and moonlit. The evening star hung tranquil in the west. The air was quivering, throbbing, aching, with the passion of the full spring season. Why had she called him? Why did she want him? What did it mean? He was a fool to humour her. If they were seen together, the whole town would talk. There would be gossip that might seriously injure him for good and all. For an instant he wondered whether she could mean it so, whether it could be a trick of Heath's to discredit his rival at a critical time. But he rejected the idea. Heath was capable of anything; but such a device as that might be double-edged. And surely Margaret was not capable of it. Nor would she be inclined to risk so much herself for her future husband's benefit.

He had not waited many moments before she appeared, stepped into the canoe, and seated herself without a word. She was all in white,

no hat, no gloves. Silently he pushed off and headed up-stream. The twilight was deeper now and he could see little of her but the white, vague figure, half-reclining, motionless. The overwhelming, star-shot quiet was broken only by the peaceful sounds of summer, the hum of a thousand insects, now and then the hoarse rumble of a frog.

"Why don't you speak?" she asked at length.

"Speak?" he repeated softly. "It is you who should speak, explain."

"Explain!" was her scornful answer. "Do you expect a woman to explain her whims?" Then, after a moment, she continued, with growing emphasis, yet still in the languidly voluptuous posture to which the canoe lends itself more than any other vehicle of motion. "I've nothing to explain. This afternoon the fancy took me. We've been out together so many nights in June. Oh, it's not my heart. Don't worry. I haven't one any longer — don't know that I ever had. I've taken it out and preserved it — in alcohol — you may see it some day — if you like. No, not my heart — just nerves. I'm so sick of it all. And Dudley's the worst — his nose — did you ever reflect upon his nose? Sometimes I see nothing of him but his nose."

"A canoe coming," said Porter, with warning interruption.

Margaret kept quiet until they were again

out of earshot. Then she burst forth more bitterly than ever. "Always appearances! That's all you think of, isn't it? The voice of the world."

He could not resist the obvious answer. "Wasn't it the voice of the world and appearances that kept you from accepting me?"

"No," she cried with conscious inconsequence, "it was your own folly. You persisted in throwing yourself away. Was there ever anything so perfectly idiotic as this career of yours? Even if you had the Democracy behind you, what could you do? And you haven't. There's Hinckley — he's the whole thing and he's bound to ruin you."

"Possibly your informant was a little prejudiced," suggested her companion.

"Bah!" she went on. "And then that woman. She's got hold of you."

"Woman?"

"Oh, don't pretend ignorance. I'm not jealous. That Viola Buckingham. Why, yes, you wanted an explanation of my coming tonight. Say I came to warn you against her. Will that do? She's cold; colder than I am. She would no more think seriously of a country personage like you — but it pleases her to have you dangling after her."

"Suppose we don't discuss Miss Buckingham," said Porter, in his most tranquil tone.

"Very well. I see she's too sacred."

Margaret's talkative mood seemed to vanish

for the moment. The canoe swept along evenly, quietly, now through broad open meadows with the clear star canopy spread over them, now under close thickets dipping in the water, heavily fragrant with the breath of unseen blossoms.

"Turn back," she said at length. "What is the use of going further?" Then she spoke once more, but gently, vaguely, almost with a trace of tenderness in her voice. "Oh, Mat, I sometimes wish it were to be done over again; but it's better as it is. I'm not good enough for you. Would you ever have expected Margaret Ferguson to say that and mean it? But I do. There's absolutely nothing good in me except a queer little faint sense of my own wicked unworthiness. That's the only thing that makes me just a little better than the man I'm going to marry to-morrow. A year hence, a few months hence, I shall be worse than he is — harder, colder, crueler. That's the way with women. It's a great escape for you, Mat. I congratulate you. And already I can see well enough that you don't care for me any longer."

Her strange tenderness hurt him more than her scorn had done and he murmured some word of protest.

"Don't talk," she interrupted. "I shall get angry again. I know you care for what I was — not for what I am. To-night has settled it. To-morrow at that cheerful ceremony we shall look at each other with strange eyes, like wanderers from different worlds. But I shall re-

member this little escapade very, very pleasantly. So, I think, will you. Oh, don't imagine I shall make any mystery of it. I shall tell Dudley and my father. Papa will be horrified. Dudley will laugh. But I think underneath he'll feel it just a little, I hope he will."

She spoke no more. Nor did he. His heart was full of strange, conflicting feelings; but he could not utter them, did not wish to try.

So they drifted idly down the stream, with the quiet stars over them, and, as it seemed, great gulfs of dim futurity yawning on every side.

When they reached the landing, she stepped out before he could even offer to assist her, and slipping into the shrubbery, was gone, leaving him to make his way homeward in doubt and wonder.

The next day the wedding took place, with all solemnity; and as she had said, the two met like wanderers from different worlds, and looked at each other with strange eyes.

CHAPTER XXII

THE second week in June Viola went to Falmouth. Before her departure she and Porter had another long talk, in which she showed such exhaustive study not only of "Power and Responsibility," but of everything else bearing on any aspect of the subject that Porter said to her, with a smile: "I shall have to begin coming to you for points. I don't see how you have done it. It is you who ought to be the candidate for governor."

But she answered him seriously, with a very deep seriousness in her great dark eyes; "I am an idle person, you know, all my time at my own disposal. I have sat up nights."

"I know many people who might sit up many nights and not learn what you have learned. But you look pale. It is hardly worth your overworking. When you get to Falmouth, let the salt wind blow all the politics out of you."

But that was not Viola's way. Before she had been at Falmouth a fortnight, she wrote to Wingate to come down and see her. When he came, she handed him a neatly written manuscript. "There," she said, "will you print that?"

He read it through carefully. It was a brief, direct, and very effective presentation of Porter's fundamental principle as to the cardinal importance of state affairs in state elections, of course with reference to Porter's candidacy on that platform. "Viola!" he cried in astonishment. "How did you learn to do it? Where did you find the ideas — and the trick of writing which is more than the ideas? We haven't a man on our staff who could have done it better."

"I found the ideas where anybody may find them," she said. "And the trick of writing — You think it will do?"

"Do? Of course it will do. We'll print it on the editorial page and an editorial with it that will have it copied all over the state."

"I want Mr. Porter to see it first," Viola said.

"Perhaps it would be as well. But there's no doubt what he will say. I've been urging him to do this sort of thing himself and he would have had to come to it. But this is infinitely better. Only he'll probably get the credit of writing it anyway. We may have to deny that. Of course you'll follow it up with others. How will you sign?"

"'Democrat,'" answered Viola promptly.

"'Democrat!' And from you, Viola. Here's a changed world. Porter must —" but Wingate did not finish his sentence. "You don't want Porter to know?" he asked.

"No," was the decided response. "Later he may, probably will — not yet."

Wingate returned to town and wrote Viola the next day that Porter was enthusiastic and intensely curious as to the authorship, evidently inclining to suspect Wingate himself. The letter was published in the manner agreed upon. It took instantly, and was widely reprinted and discussed. People had heard just enough about Porter, in stories here and there, reports of speeches, and so forth, to be ready to seize upon this brief, crisp, snappy statement of his first principle and to look eagerly for more.

On the Saturday on which the letter appeared Porter was engaged to speak at a great labour picnic. It was a much less distinguished occasion than the dinner of the Commonweal Club, but on the whole more amusing. And Porter found himself no less at home. He chatted with the boys — and the girls, took an apparently enthusiastic interest in the various sports that went on, and when it came to the speeches, listened with absorbed attention to the screaming tirades of two or three Hibernian orators who bellowed for the rights of labour, the ignominious subjection of capital, and incidentally, when they had nothing else to bellow for, for him.

Then Smith spoke a few words of prelude, to the effect that they all knew Porter was a good fellow, but that he was more than that, when he said a thing he meant it. He didn't say one thing to one party and one to another.

You knew where to find him. That was why the speaker believed in him and was glad to introduce him to his friends.

The hands which Porter had so recently shaken applauded him as he rose. His speech was simple and direct as always, less formal, perhaps, than before the Commonweal Club, but no whit less serious or less dignified. And his audience listened, in the main, as attentively as the wealthier company had done. He insisted first on the true Democratic policy of state interests and independence. However large the part of the general government might be in matters affecting the relation of the states to each other, so long as the Constitution of the United States remained in force, the most important affairs of daily life must be under state control. But if the state government was to manage these affairs, it must be honest, it must be effective. Then he went on to dwell upon the weaknesses of the present system and to show that while labour appeared to be crying for this and that piece of special legislation to remedy existing evils, the real cause of uneasiness was mistrust. Capital working openly and honestly under laws fairly made was not the enemy of the working man. He could not live without capital any more than capital could live without him. What was dangerous, what was ruinous was the feeling that capital owned the government, could put its hand in its pocket and buy legislation which would enable it to rob the

poor man of all his rights and earnings. Then he expounded very briefly and simply his idea of a remedy. Let the governor, or his appointed officers, appear in the legislature, as the people's representative. Let all important measures be introduced and guided by the executive, with free and public debate, so that the people at large could understand. "This is all I ask," said the speaker in conclusion, "publicity. No buttonholing in corners, no pulling and hauling in dark lobbies, no strangling in committee-rooms. Free, open, public discussion, with the governor in the lead of it, a man chosen by the people, directly responsible to the people, not caring a — hairpin for any legislature or any corporation. If we can get that, the state government of Massachusetts will be worth something and we shall have the other states dropping around here to see how we do it. Now, boys, ask questions, if you want to."

After the hearty applause had died away, they did ask questions, some merely impertinent and pointless, which Porter turned aside with tact and humour, others acute and intelligent, to which he tried to give an intelligent answer.

"What'll you do first, if you're elected?" shouted one fellow.

Everybody laughed at the directness of the inquiry. Porter laughed also. "I'm not even nominated yet," he said. "Very likely I sha'n't be. I'm not supposed to be talking about myself. But if I were, I'd only say what I want

to get, not how I mean to get it. It doesn't always pay a man to show his hand, you know."

Somebody raised the old cry of one-man power. "Well," answered Porter, "I believe I'd about as soon take my chance with one-man power as with three-hundred-men power. Besides it generally comes to one-man power in the end. Some of you have heard of such a thing as a boss, I dare say." Laughter and applause. "Just so. I thought you had. Well, a boss is the worst kind of one-man power, a giant in the dark, knifing and strangling wherever he pleases. They've had a boss or two in New York. And I've heard some talk of one nearer home, but I pray God there's no truth in it. Now if you don't want a boss, give power to your own representative, who comes out from you and has got to come back to you. Give him all the power he wants; but for every ounce of power give him an ounce of responsibility. Make him stand right up in public and tell you just what he's doing and how he's doing it. If, after a fair trial, you see he's working for himself and not for you, you know how to punish him. But there's that legislature of three hundred men, each working in the dark for the Lord knows what — how are you going to do anything with them?"

An old legislator, who had been at the State House for years and knew what went on there, but did not approve of fads and notions, asked

how it would be possible for the legislature to get through all its business if everything were publicly debated.

"That's a little harder one," was Porter's prompt reply; "but I'm equal to it. It would be a good thing for the state and everybody in it if the legislature did about a quarter of what it does now and did it better. For one thing, if we had decent city government — and just this same principle will give it to us — the work of the legislature would be immensely lightened. The same with strong executive departments. And of course the committee system would still be useful, but merely for thrashing out details."

So it went on, with question and answer, for some time, and when it was all over, Porter felt that he had good reason to be satisfied. Smith and Rooney congratulated him; and the latter, who had perhaps dallied a little with the social cup, would have liked to pat his leader on the back, but did not quite dare. "You're it," he cried ecstatically, "you're it. There ain't no doubt at all about it. You've got the boys pinched and that's a fact."

In the train returning to town Hinckley, who had been a curious spectator of the afternoon's proceedings, managed to seat himself at Porter's side. The chairman of the state committee offered a few compliments, with his usual bland, catlike manner. "You've got some good ideas,

Mr. Porter," he said, "some grand ideas; but I suppose you know as well as I that they never could be made to work in practice."

"Do you know it?" Porter asked, as bland, at any rate, as his opponent himself.

"I shouldn't think any one could have been long in practical politics without knowing it."

"I haven't been in practical politics so very long." Perhaps this was a little too bland, but Hinckley didn't mind those things. He paid no attention and went on with his argument.

"Your plan is to reduce the power of the legislature, isn't it?"

"Something of that nature."

"How will you do it? By means of the legislature, of course. You've got to amend the constitution of the state and that has got to be done by two successive legislatures before it comes to the popular vote. Now do you think two legislatures — probably Republican at that — are ever going to vote to take away their own power — unless you buy them?" The last phrase was spoken with a characteristic smile.

Porter smiled back. "In spite of my too brief experience of practical politics, that difficulty has occurred to me, Mr. Hinckley. But, in the first place, while my plan would curtail the power of the legislature as a body, it would give such increased opportunity for distinction and advancement to any legislator of courage and energy, that I believe plenty of strong men — some Republicans, too — would be found to

work for it, without being bought. And then — there are other powers besides the legislature."

"Ah, you mean the governor?" Hinckley's tone opened a great abyss of pity.

"No, I don't mean the governor. There's one power greater than the legislature of Massachusetts, greater than the governor of Massachusetts: that is the people of Massachusetts. Let the governor go to the people and say, 'Look here! You elected me to do a certain thing. Here's a troop of nobodies who get in the way and tell me I sha'n't do it because it doesn't suit them. What about this?' Do you think if a governor said that often enough and knew how to say it, there would be anything left of that legislature?"

If Hinckley was impressed, he didn't say so, but smiled his usual impenetrable smile and turned the conversation.

Porter accepted the change, but while he was discussing crops and the money-market, he said to himself: "I know just where to find you, Bob Hinckley."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE natural July stagnation in politics was somewhat broken by the weekly succession of Viola's letters. Devoting herself assiduously to deeper and riper study of the subject, communicating with Porter occasionally, as if from mere anxiety, on a doubtful point, she was able to develop one phase after another of the new idea with a clearness and effectiveness that astonished Wingate more than ever and aroused a constantly increasing interest in the press and in the public. Her personal references to Porter himself were comparatively insignificant; but there was an occasional allusion, as from one who knew the man well; and once she insisted, at some length, upon the thorough democracy of his ideals, his entire willingness to recognize not only the power, but the honesty and the common sense of the people at large.

"'Democrat!' Who is 'Democrat?'" came the repeated inquiry. But Wingate alone knew the secret, and Wingate was impenetrable. Then began the guesses. "Porter himself," insinuated the Republican papers. "Who else?" But to this the *Intelligencer* put forth a prompt, solemn, and unequivocal denial, which

could leave no room for further doubt. "Wingate, then?" was the next suggestion. "Admit it," wrote Viola to him. "At any rate, don't deny it." "Thanks," he wrote back. "I should be proud to admit it; but I can't quite do that, you know." Still, the denial was a little less strenuous than in Porter's case; so that the more sceptical felt themselves at liberty to entertain a doubt. And, on the whole, Wingate was generally felt to be a possible, if not a likely, claimant.

The Republican press of course contained more or less comment upon the letters, for the most part in a rather contemptuous and a rather ineffective tone. Some effort was made to meet argument with argument; but "Democrat" was quick at his weapons and was felt by impartial observers to have the best of it. Once or twice there were hints and insinuations about Porter's personal surroundings. "A man should be known by the company he keeps. A radical, a democrat, who wants to lead and represent the people, should not seek the society of nobs and snobs who care only for their own class, their own amusements, and think the people were created to provide delicacies and luxuries for others' consumption."

Viola read one or two things of this sort — all the papers were coming her way now — and wondered and reflected. Porter was suffering for his acquaintance with her — his acquaintance with her. These amiable suggestions all seemed

to start in Republican papers, though others occasionally repeated them. His acquaintance with her — which had come about at the instance of — A vague gleam of light began to break in upon her. Heath had been so anxious that Porter should be influenced, converted, by her. What if he should get the credit of being influenced and converted, even if the process had been in reality the other way? What if this had been in Heath's mind from the beginning?

As this light grew brighter, she sat down at her desk and wrote:

"DEAR DUDLEY: — I have noticed a word or two in the papers which I don't like. Are you responsible?"

The next day she got an answer:

"DEAR VIOLA: — I am surprised there should be anything in a paper you don't like; still more, that you should suspect me of anything to do with it. What if I ran down to see you Thursday afternoon for an hour or two?"

Thursday was the twenty-seventh and Viola had a royal party planned for that day — all the "family" to come down Wednesday and stay till Friday. Still, she telephoned to Heath to come.

"I haven't been here for so long," he said, as he drove up. "How you've improved it. It's a great place."

It was a great place. A huge, rambling, long-gabled, broad-piazzaed house, with gardens all about and stables in the rear, stood on a high bluff close to the water. Off to the south, over Hog Island, you could look out to sea — to Florida, if your eyes were good enough. And ten miles across the leaping, dancing waters of the bay the spires of New Bedford stood out black against the splendours of the sunset — when there was a sunset.

For on this afternoon everything was gray. It had not yet begun to rain; but the south wind was sweeping great masses of ragged cloud before it, and the tide moaned heavily over the gray rocks and the staring whiteness of the beach.

"We'll walk out to the end of the island, if you like," Viola suggested. "We shall be uninterrupted there."

The island was a flat strip of about ten acres just below the house, left in the naked wildness of juniper and berry-bushes, for more effective contrast with the finished grounds above. On the further side of it ran a fringe of great rocks where the angry waters just now dashed with unceasing turbulence. Viola made her way to one of the largest of these rocks, speaking little as she walked, just a word or two on casual

things. She seated herself as near to the water as she could and pointed Heath to a convenient place beside her.

"Do you propose to drown me?" he inquired, in mock alarm. "Think of my young wife."

"I'd forgotten your young wife for the moment. And I sha'n't try to drown you, though it might not be a bad idea." The words responded to his mockery; but her manner did not. It was grave, thoughtful, rather as if she were dwelling on something of more importance to her than his presence.

But mocking was his line of play. "Is my guilt so terrible as all that?" he asked.

Then she spoke out what she felt; but she did not raise her voice more than was necessary to overcome the sound of the water and there was no anger in her face or manner, only a profound earnestness. "I've seen the word or two in your papers, Dudley — I suppose it came from you or your friends — and I have had intelligence enough at last to understand. You played on my vanity, didn't you? Counted on it and with reason. I was to convert Mr. Porter, to refine and civilize him, to educate him out of radicalism and demagoguism and what not?"

"Well, haven't you?" inquired her cousin with much serenity.

But she paid no attention to him, only leaned a little closer that he might hear more readily. The strong, warm wind tossed her hair about

her forehead, making shadows that deepened the lustrous darkness of her eyes. "That was the bait and I was fool enough to swallow it. Little you cared about my converting him."

"I cared a great deal," he interrupted again; "but I admit my hopes were not strong."

"Well, yes, I suppose the conversion would have suited you better. But the great thing was to get him into my set and then taunt him with it, to throw out all sorts of aimless, imbecile hints and accusations which would bring discredit on him and help you. Now I see it is beginning."

"You take things so tragically, my cousin," was the cold comment on this. "You ought to be on the stage."

"Never mind where I ought to be," she said. "I am warned in time. And Mr. Porter will be. I shall tell him to keep away from me in future — and my set. There will be no more ground for your slanders at all."

She paused and drew back a little, looking out over the rough, gray-green water, while he looked at her. "Do you know," he asked at length, still with the same cynical quiet, "I believe that instead of your converting Porter, he has converted you. What a man!"

For a little while she made no reply. The wind was blowing fresher than ever. Now and then the flying spray was tossed even to their feet. "Well," she began abruptly, once more turning to face her companion, "what if he

has? I had always associated politics with men like you. Can you blame me for despising them?"

The straight thrust made him shrink slightly, as if some bolder wave had reached his face. But she did not heed his shrinking and went on. "He is different enough from you, Dudley, not only honest, not only well-intentioned, but full of manliness, full of spirit, full of energy, full of earnest hope."

Richard was himself again now, however. "You crush me, you crush me," he repeated. "Viola, you know me too well. I appear to you to be — the opposite of all these fine things. But I don't appear so to the public. I've never done anything to be ashamed of — even from your — present — Philistine point of view. No man can accuse me of dishonesty. I've never been fast — as speed goes in the world nowadays. I talk cynically to you, because you like it. But I talk the other thing to the public, because the public likes it. I'm a swell, to be sure — because the public, my public, likes that. But I'm a popular man, my dear, perhaps as much so as your new friend — for all his fancies."

She had looked steadily at him through all this, with a gaze that almost disconcerted his eloquent protest. "Popular! And appear?" she repeated. "Do you believe that Mr. Porter thinks of popularity and appearances?"

"Heavens, Viola, what else does he think of?

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What else does any of us think of? You may peel off of us appearance after appearance, like the coats off an onion, and when you get through peeling, what is there left?"

"Very little of you, I can well imagine. You can't even understand the kernel of idealism at the bottom of a man's soul lighting and inspiring all the rest. But in this case it is more than a vague idealism. Mr. Porter not only believes — he believes in something — which I believe in also."

Again she looked away at the waves and he looked at her in amazement. "Viola, this is indeed a conversion," he cried. "And this is the man whom you propose to order away from yo !"

"If it is for his good — certainly," she answered, still looking at the waves, — "and for the good of the cause."

"Oh, the cause!" It would be difficult to put more sneer into a word than Heath put into that. "The cause! The cause, which means beating your affectionate cousin." Then he spoke more seriously. "This is love, Viola, love, love. Don't you know it?"

She turned on him now almost angrily. "Love! What do you mean? Do you know how old I am? I never loved, as you mean it, and never shall. Oh, this tawdry, puling amorousness which people of your stamp spread oozily over all the simple charm of life! I don't know which would be more absurd, for me to

talk of love or for Mr. Porter. Love! If that was part of your ingenious plan, Dudley — a characteristic part — there's nothing in it, nothing, and never will be. And now, as it's getting a little damp out here, what if we go back — that is, if I've succeeded in making my opinion of you perfectly plain."

He rose in obedience to her suggestion. "Plain is no word for it," he answered. "It's as clear as it is crushing. I don't know how I shall ever redeem myself. But you'll allow me to stick to my own view as to the love part of it. That will interest Mrs. Heath so much."

Viola gave all her attention to picking her way over the rocks, none apparently to him. So, with little more talk, they returned to the house.

There Heath resisted every invitation to remain longer than for a cup of tea.

"Do you good to stay the night," Flitters suggested. "We're immensely gay here,

"'Fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world —'
'Dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth.'

So totally different from the brazen world you live in."

"Thanks," returned the eager politician, "I might catch the germ — it all sounds so seductive — and get snared among the lotus eaters for ever."

"I hardly think so," was the kind response. "You don't look it."

In the evening, when the storm had burst outside and great gusts, sweeping from the south and gorged with rain, shook the house to its foundation, as they all sat in the huge, dimly lighted central hall about the fireplace, Flitters said to Viola, "I hope you realized my devoted sacrifice to courtesy in urging that cheap political spoilsport to stay and mar our pleasure?"

Viola nodded. She knew their pleasure would have been spoiled. She was sore and smarting from that interview on the rocks. Certainly politics and everything connected therewith had a seamy side. Her belief in Porter and Porter's ideas was not for an instant shaken, nor her determination to work for them to the best of her ability; but all the personal element was cheap and vulgar and offensive. That her life, her habits, her surroundings, should be used by such a creature as Heath, to ensnare poor innocents and beguile them to destruction! And she had been a little of a fool in it all — at the beginning especially. And love! Who was Dudley Heath that he should dare to talk to her about love? Thirty years old, fixed in her maiden ways, with a heart cold as Diana's, remote, entrenched from all such things, what had she to do with love? And Porter, too? Just recovered, if recovered, from a long-cherished passion for Margaret Ferguson, — by the way, how could he? — what sort of a man would he

be, if he were already in love with herself? No, the association between them was merely that between friends working for the same life-object. It would be nothing more, should be nothing more, there could be no question of anything more. Only, she must warn him to keep away from her. There must be no excuse for any of this newspaper nonsense, that was clear enough.

Meantime, to her fretted spirit, the dancing merriment of the unfretted spirits about her was soothing and diverting. They sang, they told stories, they guessed riddles, they played games, they sang again; and always they laughed, now in broad bursts unanimously, now with little jets, darting and sparkling in one corner or another, as some idle tale was whispered in an idle ear. Even Constance laughed, because Flitters did, always a trifle behind the rest, and always with that puzzled look on her pure Greek forehead, as of one who would so like to know what the laughter was all about, would so like to enter into her idol's fresh and faunlike world, if she only could. And eager as her laughter was her listening, when he took his mandolin and sang some scrap of old ballad or forgotten love-lay, preluding with light, broken chords in vague harmony:

"O hermit brown, O hermit gray,
Shrive me as gently as you may,
Folly leads the fair astray,
Brown hermit.

I'll leave the world when gray hair thins.
Till then love reigns and laughter wins.—
A pleasant world, for all its sins,
Some term it."

Viola, watching, perhaps with eyes a little fretted, saw Constance's look of rapt devotion and was troubled by it. This amorousness, this vague, vexatious amorousness, always in the way, useless and tormenting! Still, surely with Constance there could be nothing worth serious consideration. It was absolutely impossible that Flitters should ever care anything for her and she was too slow, too dull, too impassive, to cherish any feeling that could cause her any serious discomfort. It was often a question with Viola how far she was responsible for the doings of her young people. None of them, indeed, was so very young, twenty-three or four perhaps the youngest. All of them were supposed to be more or less used to taking care of themselves. Still, she was the head of the household, of the "family." And Flitters was a singular being. As she sat quiet in her great chair, a little apart from the rest, the world seemed suddenly to have become more thought-clouded than usual.

There was Ruth, too. Ruth was rich in her own right, although she had a mother living, to whose authority it is to be feared her daughter paid very little attention. If Ruth would marry Wingate, everything would be so satisfactory. Viola had even ventured a word to

her on the subject, since she came to Falmouth, suggesting that, if she had any such intention, it might be well to — well to — in short to confine admiration of Eugene's playing to more conventional limits. Ruth adored Viola, but she received these hints very coldly. She had no intention whatsoever of marrying Wingate, she said. If Viola meant to insinuate that there was anything between herself and Eugene, it was an entire mistake. Eugene was all spirit. There was a spiritual, musical bond between them — nothing more. Now, as Viola watched the two, with their heads close together, Ruth talking in her eager fashion, Eugene listening and looking as heavy as always when separated from his violin, she thought to herself that these spiritual bonds were peculiar things. It occurred to her also that she had practically spoken to Heath of a spiritual bond between herself and Porter and the thought did not increase her serenity.

There had come a moment's lull in the merriment. The storm without was fiercer than ever and dashed sheets of rain against the window-panes. Flitters sat with his head leaned forward in his hands, absorbed in thought — or sleep.

"Flitters! Flitters!" cried Laura. "Wake up. This is unendurable. Don't keep us waiting while you concoct your dreary advertisements for Hanks's."

"Hanks's! Advertisements!" answered a hollow voice from the unraised head. "All that is passed — long, long ago. It is better to drop those things before they drop you. The truth is, everything is passed. Do you hear that wind? It reminds me of the grave. I'm getting old, old, old. The fashion of this world passeth away."

"Pinch him! Stick pins into him — hairpins! Rouse him at any rate," urged Flora and Laura together. And Flora added, "Laughter is a fashion that never passes away. It is the only wear for you, Flitters, — motley. If you cast it off, as you have Hanks's, there will be nothing left of you but a thin spectre, as intangible and unprofitable as the ghost of an old song."

Flitters sat up and gazed at her with lacklustre eyes. "The ghost of an old song. I believe that fits me exactly. Some day my laughter will go out, like a candle in a sudden wind; and there will be nothing left of me, nothing — but the ghost of an old song." There was a melancholy pause. Then, with a sigh, he began, in a different tone. "Girls, I believe it's time for me to marry."

"Marry!" echoed the astonished chorus.

"I said 'marry.' I'm growing old. I feel my infirmities. I need the loving watchfulness of feminine conventionality to balk all my unseemly propensities and prevent my slipping into a hopelessly indecorous senility."

"Oh, marry then, by all means," urged Laura.

"Just so; but whom? The difficulty is to decide."

"Love?" Laura suggested again.

"Love! My love is universal, as all-embracing and all-containing as the sea. Any one poor insufficient object would be lost, drowned, suffocated in it. No, love must not enter into it at all. Now you girls — of course, I feel that any one of you — would enter into my plans with ardour."

"Of course," shouted the chorus; but Constance being, as usual, a little behind the rest, her "of course" was painfully conspicuous.

"Just so. Thank you. And, after all, how could you do better? I am of a sweet disposition, tractable, biddable, perfectly indifferent as to cooking — only a little irregular in my hours. But, you see, there are so many of you. I had thought — that if you drew lots — it might enliven this dull evening — and make it easier for me."

"Lots," repeated the chorus, with infinite glee; and Constance repeated "lots" softly, with her usual look of bewilderment much intensified.

"I don't understand what it's all about," said Miss Tucker, laughing with the rest.

"I do," added Viola. "And, George," she remonstrated, looking at Constance doubtfully,

" sometimes you run very near the edge of good taste."

" I love to run near the edge of anything," was the prompt reply. " But, oh, Viola, sometimes you run very near the edge of Philistinism. Can't you leave any room for the comedy of life? What is good taste but the unerring instinct of an artist — like me? We create it for the rest of the world. Come now, I've prepared everything. Here are the lots. They go into my hat. Everybody draws something — verse or prose — Viola, too, Miss Tucker, too — if she draws me and won't take me, my cake is dough. The fortunate one gets a portrait of your humble servant — by himself — in an adoring attitude."

He turned suddenly to the fire and threw in some chemical which burned up in a ghastly blue flame and filled the room with lurid shadows. Then he held the hat above his head and murmured a monotonous incantation in gruesome verses. Then he moved about among them like a spirit in the blue glare and each drew her lot in silence.

When the hat was empty, he fetched a long breath and turned on the light. " It's all over," he cried. " My fate is sealed. No more suppers with the ballet after midnight, no more ' pack your grip and take the next train for anywhere.' Well, which is it? "

" Not I," cried Laura. " Oh, misery! Mine is plain verse." And she read it.

"And mine plainer prose," said Flora.

So another and another. But Constance unfolded hers and there was the gentleman himself, as he had said, in an adoring attitude.

For just the fraction of a second there was a troubled pause. Constance's dark cheek and forehead turned crimson and Viola looked very ill at ease. But Flitters was beyond disturbance, even at such a crisis. "Comfort the poor girl," he cried, "comfort her and congratulate me. She is simply stunned at the sudden influx of fortune — and so am I. 'She needs the balmy consolation of her relations,' as the immortal George W. once remarked. Who can accept such a windfall in the orderly current of life without wonder and awe? Come, I'll sing you a song which perfectly expresses the state of things."

But the song did not express the state of things. It gently led in another direction. And so Constance's cheeks were left to resume their natural colour and on the surface the incident was put aside. Nevertheless, a certain abstraction in the lady's manner, with an occasional little start when her attention was suddenly called towards Flitters, hardly escaped the notice of watchful observers.

The next morning Flora remonstrated. "Flitters, you'll have Constance on your hands in a way you won't like, if you aren't careful. You don't understand these passions."

"These passions. Nonsense! You're jealous.

Don't you wish you'd drawn the lot yourself?"

"Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't."

Viola's remonstrance was more serious. "George, this is my house, you know. That girl is getting foolish about you. What shall I do? Will you be careful?"

"Sweet cousin, I'll be careful."

But as they all left an hour after, he had little chance to be anything else.

CHAPTER XXIV

"WELL," said Heath, walking into Wood's office the morning after the little trip to Falmouth, "it's all over."

"All over?" inquired his uncle, only moderate curiosity expressed in his strong, red features. "What's all over?"

"Viola's all over — head and ears in love with Porter. Just as I told you."

The uncle chewed his cigar for an instant, his brows contracted ever so slightly. "I thought you said she wasn't a fool."

"Every woman is a fool where a man is concerned."

"Well," Wood continued, again after an instant's thought — and chewing, "of course it might have happened better. But we can use it all, just the same. Is he sweet on her?"

Heath looked thoroughly cross. "How am I to know? She didn't say she was sweet on him, said she wasn't; but I saw all I wanted to."

"And a little more." Uncle William laughed his fat, exasperating laugh. "Jealous, aren't you? But you can't have all his girls, you know."

"Jealous be hanged!" was the impatient

answer. "There's more to it, too. If she were just in love with him, it wouldn't be so bad. But she's swung clear round to his ideas. Believes in his notions. Think of it! She's found out our little game and says she'll warn him to keep away from her. But he won't, if he's the man I take him for."

"You shouldn't have said she wasn't a fool, Dudley. You misjudged her. But it will work for us all the same. Let it go on. It isn't ripe yet. We'll drop a hint about it occasionally, but not enough to scare him. Let him get in with that crowd thicker and thicker. Then, if he's nominated, we'll put it strong when the time comes."

"If he's nominated!" repeated Heath, with the most scornful curve of his scornful mouth. "Of course he'll be nominated. Do you expect to prevent it?"

Wood was a man of business and wasted no energy on scorn. "I can't do much to prevent it — nor you. Things do seem to be going rather his way just now. Who writes those 'Democrat' letters, Dudley? Do you know?"

"They say, Wingate."

"I know that's what they say. I don't believe it. He hasn't got it in him. They're good letters — all damned foolishness, but they take. Damned foolishness always does take, when you talk it right. I set Walker to answering one or two of them; but I don't think it's our cue to take too much notice of them

now. Might get an answer in some Democratic paper. It would do more good there, before the nomination."

"You're crazy to have a finger in the nomination, aren't you?" Heath asked, still scornful. "Don't you know it's the other party?"

"Just now it's the other party that counts."

"Don't you know Porter is sure of it?"

"Well," answered the more cheerful uncle, "there's many a slip between the lip, especially Porter's kind of lip, and the convention. You may have heard of Robert N. Hinckley, I suppose."

"Hinckley! Who can tell where to find him?"

"I can," Wood replied at once. "Wherever Porter isn't. I have it on the best authority that Hinckley will put the knife into Porter when and where he can. After the nomination I don't say. But until then it's fight."

Heath still showed very little enthusiasm. He smoked, leaning back in his chair, and watched his uncle curiously. "I don't believe in Hinckley," he said.

"All right," returned the other. "For hating I do. And he's got a strong grip on the machine."

"But," persisted Heath, "who's he going to put up, now Burke's gone back on him and is out for the lieutenant-governorship with Porter? Pretty tame work I call that. They say Hinckley's taken up Dillworthy!"

"So he has. And Dillworthy has more show than you might think. He's rich. He's strong in Lawrence and all the manufacturing towns. Two-thirds of the women in the state wear his corsets and know his picture. That goes a long way, I can tell you."

Heath still smoked, but he showed a grain more interest.

"But it's money they need," Wood went on. "Dillworthy can't buy all the delegates and the rest of his crowd are poor. Wingate's been pulling teeth everywhere for the other side." The would-be boss of Massachusetts took his cigar from his mouth, looked thoughtfully at the chewed end of it, then looked with keen, half-shut eyes at his nephew, then said: "Dudley, I'm thinking of putting in some money on the game myself."

Heath sat up now and seemed a different man. "The devil!" he cried. "That's a strong step."

Wood nodded.

"And Hinckley," went on the younger man, "to get into such a mix-up with him! He'd cut your throat in a moment, you know, and be glad of the chance."

"I know it," was the unmoved reply.

"You must be awfully afraid of Porter. That's all I can say."

"I am awfully afraid of Porter. If I had a stronger man to back me up, it would be different."

"Thank you so much."

"You can beat Dillworthy easy; but if Porter gets that nomination, with all he has behind him, I'm afraid he'll down you, and it means a lot to me. Now if I can fix things with Hinckley to get Porter strangled in the convention, I believe it's my play to do it."

"Well," answered Heath, settling back into something of his former indifference, "I don't know but it means even more to you than it does to me. Have it your own way. But it's a big risk."

"My God, Dudley!" returned his uncle, stirred from his usual control by the other's coldness. "I should think it meant as much to you as it could to anybody. If I could put some of Porter's fight into you, it would be worth more than giving money to Hinckley."

"Fight!" echoed the nephew. "I can fight — straight. But this wire-pulling — in the dark — you do it so much better, you know. Do you want me to see Hinckley?"

"Nonsense! I don't want anybody to see him yet. It is a big risk, as you say. But if things don't look brighter in a few weeks, I shall take it. Now, is there anything else we can do?"

Heath reflected a few moments. "We can keep the newspapers going, of course."

"Oh, yes. We'll do that anyway."

"Then there's my father-in-law," Heath added. "Porter thinks a good deal of him. I'm sure I don't know why. It's still just pos-

sible that he might argue or buy him off. The old gentleman's got rather a neat way of putting things. It would all depend on whether Porter's discouraged or not."

Wood shook his head. "I don't think Porter's a man to be discouraged, or scared, or bought. He don't know what's good for himself — or care. Still, it would be no harm for old Ferguson to try."

As a consequence old Ferguson did try a few days later. The substance of his line of argument is easily indicated.

"Mat, there was a fellow once by the name of Quixote. He had what he thought were some mighty good ideas, but they landed him in a mess with windmills."

"Meaning the Republican party?" suggested Porter smiling.

"Not meaning any party," answered old Ferguson, returning the smile, with his usual vague suavity. "Just facts, which go round and round the same old way, without regard to anybody's ideas. Now, Mat, the truth is, I can't bear to see you make a Quixote, that is a fool, of yourself. I admired your father and I've liked you from a boy. You're up against solid facts in the shape of Robert N. Hinckley. Don't you know he's got the whole Democratic machine in his pocket? He pulls every wire there is to pull. He'll pack that convention with delegates who will work his way and you'll never have the ghost of a show at all. Even

if you should be nominated, what can you do against William J. Wood and all he has behind him? I'm advising you like a father, Mat. Get out while there's time. There's the same position I spoke of last winter all ready for you; but it won't be waiting long. We don't like the man we've had and he's got to go. The salary's ten thousand."

"Five last winter, wasn't it?"

"Good!" returned the imperturbable Ferguson. "I see you've borne it in mind. Yes, it was five then, but it's ten now. There's more pay and more work."

So Ferguson, at much greater length than I have cared to write down. He was a somewhat prolix personage.

Porter was not; and he closed the interview briefly. "It's no sort of use, Mr. Ferguson. I appreciate your kindness and your good intentions; but I'm in this contest to stay, in spite of Robert N. Hinckley, William J. Wood — and the devil, if you'll allow me to say so."

CHAPTER XXV

HEATH's visit had caused Viola great annoyance. There was no doubt about that. She had thrown herself heart and soul, with all the energy of her eager nature, into the fight for Porter's political ideas, and now to be told that it was all a wretched boy and girl love-affair! Of course it was absurd. It had never even for a moment entered her head to consider Porter as a possible lover. She wanted no lovers. She was free, impersonal, sexless, as a spirit. And he to her was a mere political abstraction, to be laboured for and sacrificed to, like many another such abstraction, with far more single-hearted zeal than any idol of flesh and blood. As to his feeling she had as little doubt. He had come to her, as she knew, smarting from Margaret's rejection, come to her, as she had come to him, purely with abstract interests and abstract ideas. Yes, Heath's insinuations were certainly preposterous.

Yet they were none the less annoying. At first she felt that she did not care to see Porter in the flesh ever again. She would write her letters and go on fighting for him as eagerly as before; but the less personal contact there

might be between them, the better. And in view of Heath's wretched designs and low newspaper paragraphs, there was no doubt that such separation would be even more essential to Porter than to her. Yet, as she remembered, as she had at no time forgotten, she had invited Porter to come down and visit her for a day or two during the summer. Well, the visit had better be given up. It was a little awkward for her to be the one to make this decision, and, to her surprise, she found that she did not wish to give the visit up. There were so many points on which she needed further light which could only come or could best come from a personal interview. Still, there was no question as to what ought to be done. She would write to Porter at once, reminding him of her invitation, but referring frankly to the odious newspaper paragraphs and suggesting that under the circumstances perhaps he had better stay away. Of course she and Miss Tucker would be glad to see him; but public characters could not always choose their associates. She was in doubt whether to mention what she had discovered as to Heath's mischievous design. But on the whole she felt that she could not bring herself to do that in a letter. Time enough for such mention — if ever — when they should meet in the autumn.

The letter was written; and as might have been expected, as perhaps Viola unconsciously did expect, Porter soon replied, in a playful

tone, saying that if she did not want to see him she might say so, but if she did, he was not going to allow his social relations to be controlled by the Republican newspapers.

What was to be done? Now that Heath's sardonic countenance was fading in the background of time, the whole thing began to seem rather childish. Yes, Porter should come, come with George and two or three others, so that the visit might seem less marked. Then she would tell him the whole story of Heath and all pertaining to him and they could decide on a permanent course of action. That was the easiest way out of the difficulty.

So, on a lovely August afternoon, Porter and Viola were sailing across the bay towards New Bedford, in a smart southerly breeze. Sailing was Viola's passion, and few men could handle a boat better than she. Her muscle was almost as strong as her nerve. As for Porter, he was essentially a landsman. The sea sounds and lights and odours charmed him, but pulling a rope at need under instructions was the limit of his powers of navigation.

They were running rather near the wind, and the rough, choppy water threatened to deluge them with spray, so that Viola slipped a raincoat over her white duck dress and offered her passenger a similar protection. When he had accepted it, he sat in silence, for a few moments, watching her. Somehow she struck him as beautiful in a way he had not thought of before,

with a more feminine charm, in spite of, or because of the roughness of her attire and surroundings. Her dark hair tossed and gleamed in the wind and the dazzling sunshine. Her tall figure swayed to and fro with a wonderful freedom, following the motion of the tiller and of the boat. There was something ample about her, something glorious, as if her mind and body both were framed in a nobler mould than those of common men.

She wondered that he did not speak, and, noting that he was watching her, misunderstood the cause. Just then an unusually large wave jarred the boat and spattered them with spray. "Are you anxious?" she asked. "Mistrustful of my seamanship? It is only a bit fresh — and the way we are heading."

"Anxious!" he repeated with a contented laugh. "I hadn't given it a thought. I am in your hands and perfectly satisfied to be so."

She also looked contented and for awhile they swept on in sunlit silence over the blue glory, enraptured, intoxicated with the splendid freedom of the sea.

But Viola had so many things to ask. "Unless you want to get away from politics entirely, tell me about them," she began. "The newspapers are so unsatisfactory."

"I don't want to get away from them," was the placid answer. "This air ought to purify even the discussion of politics."

"You have been speaking," she said. "I saw that."

"Yes, I have spoken several times, in the western part of the state. I shall speak several times more; but of course speaking will have more point after the nomination, if I get it."

"You must get it. And the others, Smith, Burke — are they working?"

"Burke is doing all it is in his power to do. He'll make a good lieutenant-governor. Smith is a man and a hero."

"Yet you don't seem quite satisfied?" She glanced at him keenly. "Hinckley perhaps?"

"Yes, Hinckley is the rub. He has a tremendous hold on the local machines. Dillworthy furnishes the money and Hinckley knows just where to put every dollar. They won't be able to get a majority of the delegates pledged, that I'm almost sure of. But neither shall we, I'm afraid. It will be a hard tussle in the convention."

Viola made no reply. The strong breeze was hurrying them onward. Here and there about them the water was dotted with white sails, dipping, swaying, now in light and now in shadow, with swift change, like the wings of soaring seabirds.

"Have you read the 'Democrat' letters?" Porter asked.

She nodded.

"They have helped me more than anything

else, I think," he went on. "They are reprinted everywhere, almost always with approval. They are just what I should have wished to write myself; only it would have been far less effective."

"The author?" she inquired, keeping her eye intent on a schooner, which was bearing directly athwart their course.

"Ah," he answered. "The author! I dream of him nights. Who can possibly understand my ideas so well? Of course they all accused me at first; but Wingate denied it so decidedly there was no more said. Everybody now declares that Wingate writes them himself; but I cannot quite think so. Then there is Marston. But he denies it and anyway I don't believe he could. Besides, he is too ill."

"I write them," she said, quite simply, still intent on her steering. "Of course I don't want you to tell any one."

Porter gazed at her in astonishment. "You write them? It's impossible."

"Thank you."

He paid no attention to the irony, but continued to pour forth his amazement and delight. "Such a thorough understanding of the subject and such a gift of lucid exposition and expression!"

"We'll let the gift go, as being in your imagination largely," she replied. The schooner had passed ahead of them now and the course was clear. "But for understanding the subject — you know how much I've talked with you.

And that is nothing to what I've read — and what I've thought."

He was still looking at her in wonder, only half-believing, not at all comprehending. "No man has ever grasped it as you have — has ever troubled to."

"That's just it," she said. "I have troubled to."

"Most men might have troubled till doomsday without ever being able to write one of those letters."

For a time neither spoke. The spires and chimneys of New Bedford loomed taller in front of them, cut sharp against the gleaming blue. The dance, the long curling roll, of the crested waves about them was more enchanting than any fancied round of sprites or fays.

"You wonder at my silence," Porter said at last. "But I can't take it in. How does it happen that you — you are doing this thing? What does it mean?"

She answered as quietly and simply as always: "It means that a woman who has lived in idleness all her life, receiving and storing up richness, who has perhaps, as you say, a little gift, has at last found something to believe in. That is all."

Again silence. This time it was Viola who broke it. "Unfortunately there's another side to the matter."

"How another side? To what matter?" he asked.

"To our acquaintance," she answered, looking far away to the south over the tossing sea. "Sometimes I think it would have been better if George had never brought you to us."

At first he hardly seemed to follow her. Then his face cleared. "You mean that nonsense in the Republican papers that you spoke of."

"That — and more than that." Then she told him briefly what she had divined in regard to Heath's schemes, about the latter's visit, and the substance of their talk, omitting naturally Heath's personal insinuations.

Porter listened, with a cloud on his brow. When she had finished, reading, or thinking she had read, in his face, dismay and doubt, she added, "So, you see, it will be better if you keep away from us in future, at any rate till the campaign is over."

She had misunderstood him. "Keep away!" he repeated, with more indignation than she had ever seen in him before. "Keep away! I have heard of low devices in politics and seen a good many of them; but that goes a little beyond my personal experience. That is Wood and Heath all over. What a pair! Keep away! Could you suppose I should allow my friendships to be affected by such preposterous nonsense as that? They have hurt themselves a thousand times more than they have hurt me. One of your letters has done me more good than all their slander and trickery can do harm. But the deviltry of it!"

She heard him with immense satisfaction; but she considered herself obliged still to argue the point. "Your feeling is natural — to you," she said. "It was mine at first. But is it wise?"

He cut her off with absolute decision. "Don't speak of it any more. I shall do precisely what I should have done in every way, if this had never come up. It is a good thing that we know it and understand — for our own peace of mind. Otherwise it doesn't concern us. We win or lose without regard to such dirty weapons."

He spoke her inmost heart exactly and she was happy. "Very well," she answered, "I hope you are right. I hope we are right; for I agree with you."

Then she put the boat about and steered for home. The wind was on the quarter now and with loosened sheets they swept over the long, rolling waves, with that motion which is the freest, the richest, the most rhythmical in the world. There was less talk between them than before. Their passage was so swift, so quiet, so voluptuous, it tended more to reverie than speech. Two or three times Viola roused herself to ask light on some political point. She gave her companion a brief outline of the course she meant to follow in her letters. He approved almost entirely, except for a hint or suggestion here or there. Some few words were exchanged also as to the past, bits of reminiscence such as help to fill out one's picture of a friend and

make it perfect. Porter said something of his sister's great desire to meet Viola and expressed the hope that she might come to Foxbridge, for a short visit, at least. To which she replied that nothing would please her better. Only, did he think —? Yes, most emphatically he did think.

But even these bits of talk were vague and tranquil — broken by delicious silences, when the ear was charmed by the plash of spray from the bow and the long rolling fall of some overcrested wave. And Porter found his first impression deepening of Viola's feminine loveliness, of the noble grace of her figure, as he saw her against the golden, dazzling splendour of the evening sky. Somehow the figure, the face, the whole character, of Margaret Heath kept crowding into his memory at the same time and greatly to Viola's advantage. What? Could he love Viola? He had never thought of it before, had thought that such love as his nature had to give was Margaret's and Margaret's only. But now Margaret was beginning to seem pale and poor and lifeless beside this new, splendid nature, which to-day had revealed to him so much of itself. Well, one thing was at least certain. Viola might care for his politics; but she was not the sort of woman who would care for his, or probably for any one's, love-making. If she had been she would have been married long, long before this. So, evidently, the thing to do was to stick to politics and politics only. The sore memory, not of Margaret herself, but of his

love, his passion, his disappointment, would make it simple enough for him not to transgress the limits.

These thoughts were so absorbing that the end of the voyage came before he was aware. "It has been too short," he said, "too short."

Something in his tone struck Viola and brought up Heath's miserable hints of amorosity. Then she was angry with herself. How easy it was to let one's fancy act in these love matters! How exasperating that that smooth serpent should have filled the Eden of her imagination with such poisonous activity. She cared nothing for Porter — in that way. Why suppose that he cared anything for her? Six months ago he was in love with Margaret Ferguson. Doubtless he was in love with her memory still. Margaret Ferguson was a poor creature. But love's vagaries — Anyway, it was all unprofitable. There were the "Democrat" letters and Hinckley to think of. Surely quite enough.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Democratic state committee met on Thursday, August 17th, to make the necessary arrangements for the convention and the campaign. Burke, hot-headed as usual, would have liked to push the committee to a test vote on the merits of the different candidates; but Porter opposed this absolutely and Smith supported him. The committee was in the hands of the machine, they urged, and the machine was largely controlled by Hinckley. Victory in such a contest would be doubtful and would be worth comparatively little, if gained; while defeat might be very demoralizing. Therefore the committee performed its regular functions with great tranquillity, Hinckley being quite as unwilling to force the fighting as were his opponents. Thursday, September 28th, was fixed as the day for the convention; and a few general resolutions were passed. That was all.

A good deal of quiet canvassing was done, however, and each party was astonished at the strength of the other.

"That Hinckley, he's up to every dirty trick in the world," remarked Smith to his chief.

"I hope he won't be too many for us," the chief answered.

"I don't think so, but we've got to work," was the determined reply.

"We must have more money," said Hinckley to his candidate, Dillworthy. "Porter's going to be a hard man to beat."

Thereupon Dillworthy groaned and unbuttoned his capacious pocket; but even so, Hinckley doubted whether the pocket would be capacious enough.

Three or four days later, Hinckley received the following note:

"My dear Hinckley: — I want to have a little talk with you. You can easily understand that it might be as well for us not to be seen walking arm in arm down State Street. But I've noticed a nice piece of woods back of your house in Salisbury. I may be running through there on Cutler Street in my touring car any afternoon next week at any hour. If I knew when I was likely to meet you, we might take a little stroll together and no one be the wiser. What do you say? Sincerely yours,

"William J. Wood."

Hinckley thought the matter over for an hour and answered as follows:

"My dear Wood: — I shall be in the neighbourhood you mention Thursday about four,

and shall be glad to take a quiet stroll with you. Leave your auto and walk up the second cart path beyond my house. You'll find me in two minutes. Sincerely yours,

"ROBERT N. HINCKLEY."

So it came to pass that on the Thursday afternoon the Republican leader and the Democratic leader were wandering through the forest, side by side, in pastoral intimacy, Wood having given his chauffeur directions to meet him an hour or so later.

At first they talked about Hinckley's place, how much he owned, when he bought it. Did he farm much? Cattle? etc., etc.

In a little while they ascended a sharp declivity and came to a big rock from which they could see miles of country round about, woods sparkling in the August sunlight, cornfields, the river winding lazily.

"What if we sat down?" Hinckley suggested.

They sat down and looked at the prospect — without seeing it.

"I wanted to talk politics," began Wood abruptly.

"So I supposed," was the calm reply.

"It looks to me as though Porter was going to win out."

"Nomination or election?" Hinckley inquired, as if really in uncertainty.

"Oh, we'll take care of him fast enough, if he ever gets along to us."

"But you'd be glad to have him taken care of before that?"

Wood nodded. He was a whittler by nature, and now he had got out his knife and was carving a stick — neatly, and chewing a big cigar at the same time. Hinckley held his cigar between his fingers and leaned back in a comfortable corner of the rocks, his dark eyes half-closed, impenetrable.

"You're in the fight for good, I judge?" Wood went on at length.

"Well, yes, I don't mind admitting that — till the convention, of course."

"Of course," was the somewhat absent echo. "Porter's a smart young fellow?" added the Republican, still absent, or seeming so.

"Too smart."

"That's right," Wood agreed, with much heartiness. "He'd run the whole Democratic party on the rocks, if you'd let him."

"We should both regret that, shouldn't we?" asked Hinckley with his cordial smile.

But Wood stopped his whittling for the moment and took up the irony seriously. "Of course we should. You and I have been brought up to play the game the old way and it's the best way, for us and for the country. If we let these young colts butt in and kick over the traces, it will ruin everything in the

end, party, state, country, and all. It won't do, it won't do. Now, can you beat Porter?"

As he asked the square question, he went back to his whittling, with greater enthusiasm than ever.

But Hinckley was hardly in the habit of giving square answers to square questions. "I can try," was all he said.

The Republican leader held up his stick and squinted at it, with the thoughtful nicety of a boy of fourteen engaged in the same pursuit. Then he carefully removed a few almost imperceptible excrescences. As he did so, he asked another question. "I suppose it's a good deal a matter of money?"

"Well, of course money does enter into it."

"Of course. And I've heard that money isn't always plenty in the Democratic treasury."

"Have you? You know we haven't the tariff milch cow on our side."

"Exactly. Still, Dillworthy has money."

"Oh, yes, Dillworthy has money — not enough. At any rate, he won't spend enough."

Wood looked up thoughtfully at his companion, then turned to his whittling, with more zeal than ever. "Would twenty thousand help to beat Porter?" he asked.

Probably the chairman had been expecting something of this kind; for his even voice showed neither surprise nor perturbation. "It would certainly help — help a lot. But you

must understand, I can't agree positively to deliver the goods. I'll do my best, because I'm fighting for myself as well as you. But even so, it's a toss-up. Porter's strong."

Wood nodded, still whittling. "I know all that. I'll have to take the chance."

"Besides," Hinckley continued, "it's risky business, as of course you understand — risky for you, risky for me. Every trace will have to be covered."

"I'm a Republican," Wood answered, looking up, then looking down again, "and therefore naturally virtuous; but I've been in politics thirty years and I don't think even the chairman of the Democratic state committee can teach me much. There'll be no checks, no receipts, no red tape of any kind. I've got the stuff right here in my pocket. I give it to you — and there's the end of it. I believe it's your interest to down Porter just as much as it is mine — and more. That's what I count on."

So saying, he shut his knife with a snap and put it in one pocket, while from another he drew a fat yellow envelope and held it out to his companion.

Hinckley was still grave and calm; but he hesitated for a moment, looking Wood straight in the eye. Then, without further protest or comment, the fat yellow envelope changed hands.

"Well," said Wood, standing up and shaking

himself a little, "I'm glad to get that off my mind. If you think you need more, we'll see what can be done."

"No," Hinckley answered, rising also, "I guess that's enough, considering where it comes from. I'll milk Dillworthy for all he's worth, and there are others. If we don't win out, it will be because money can't do it."

As they walked slowly back, having transacted what was really essential of their business, they talked a little further on the situation. "I suppose Burke goes in second?" Wood asked.

"Not with me," was the decided answer. "It may be Walker, it may be Blodgett, not Burke."

"How about Maloney?" inquired Wood a little later. "Is he in it? Will he swing Boston your way?"

"Says he won't meddle. He surely won't to help me. There's no love lost between us."

Once more Wood spoke, after another pause. "Of course you've noticed the kind of company Porter's been keeping lately?"

Hinckley gave a short, sharp look at his companion. "Yes, I've noticed."

"Something worth your attention there perhaps."

"Perhaps."

Then they came near the open road and parted with a cordial handshake.

Wood did not observe any public change in Hinckley's activity as a result of this interview,

unless that one or two Democratic papers hinted cautiously at Porter's new social affiliations; but the Republican chief was not at all disturbed. "Hinckley's an old fox," Wood said to Heath, who had been sceptical about the whole transaction. "Newspaper fighting isn't his line; but there isn't a man in the United States who could put every dollar of that money in a better place than he can, if he has a mind to. And he has a mind to. I'm sure of that."

CHAPTER XXVII

Porter had had a good deal to say to his sister about Viola. At first Clara had taken little interest and had even repeated some of her original objections. "Is she a desirable influence for you, Mat? I mean, doesn't she live in an idle, luxurious, sceptical set, who will be sure to distract you from the serious purpose of your life?"

"No, no," was the earnest answer. "You don't understand her. It is true, she has an artistic set about her; but they're not idle, some of them are hard workers and intense believers in their own ideals. And then she's quite different from the others. She's one of the most serious women I ever met and one of the strongest minds — man or woman. She so often makes me think of you, Clara. And she enters into my ideas as no one but you has done."

Miss Porter had never shown her strength more than in overcoming her instinctive dislike to the object of her brother's admiration; but she did overcome it. If this lady was really a help to him, she must be welcomed and encouraged. Even if Mat should love her, it could not be worse than Margaret Ferguson and might

be much better. Therefore Clara expressed a great desire to make Miss Buckingham's acquaintance, and when Porter proposed that she should be invited to pass a few days in Foxbridge, the suggestion was received with merely a mild protest.

"I should be delighted to see her. Only — of course, she is unmarried and rich — and you are rather prominent just now — and in Foxbridge people do talk so."

But Porter was just smarting from Viola's report of Heath's machinations and was bitterly indifferent to anybody's talk. "You know I care nothing for that sort of nonsense, Clara. There is and can be no love-making between Miss Buckingham and me. Her interest in my interests is as absolutely impersonal as a man's would be. I propose to treat her just as if she were a man."

Clara made no further objection, though she said to herself that Miss Buckingham was not a man and that Mat's process of reasoning showed most clearly that he was.

A cordial note was sent to Falmouth, in which Miss Porter explained that she was very anxious to make Miss Buckingham's acquaintance, but was not much in the habit of going away from home herself. Could Miss Buckingham be persuaded to spend a few days in a very quiet country household in Foxbridge?

Viola read the note with pleasure, but she saw the difficulties much more clearly than Por-

ter had done. Villagers would gossip, others would gossip. Those wretched insinuations of Dudley's —! Yet, after all, her spirit reacted quite as proudly as had her friend's. Trusting in her innocence of intention and her natural dignity she had lived her life hitherto as she pleased. Was she now, when she was working for the highest purpose she had ever known, to be hampered by convention, by trivial considerations of false propriety, by petty chatter of idle tongues? So she sat down and wrote Miss Porter that she would come to her on Saturday, September 10th, and stay until the Monday afternoon.

From the moment of her arrival, she felt that she had done right. To understand Porter thoroughly it was necessary to see him at home. The quaint, prim, quiet house, with its old fashions and old furniture — Miss Porter herself, quaint, prim, quiet, with the smooth white hair, olive face, and calm brown eyes, a lady of ladies in her unchanging garb, a scholar, too, a learned linguist, who had kept pace with her father's deeper studies — Viola loved it all, at once, not with a mere collector's curiosity, but with an intimate, inborn sympathy, although her own habits and breeding belonged to such a different world.

Saturday evening they all three chatted together peacefully, in the long, low-studded parlour. Politics came first. Miss Porter was eager to learn the week's progress and her

brother told readily what there was to tell. Then the conversation passed to more general matters. Viola did not talk a great deal, only enough to show that she was thoroughly contented and at home. Her chief interest was in watching the brother and sister together and in studying the marked resemblances in their characters. Miss Porter had less instinctive sympathy, less responsive tact, was more obtrusively unbending — in short, showed the effect of her secluded, solitary life; but every line of her face and every movement of her body declared the same firmness of ideal purpose, the clear tenacity, which in her brother was certain, in the end, to force the way to success. Viola, as she watched her hostess talk and watched her listen, appreciated fully that the whole devotion, the whole thought and zeal and sacrifice of a rare and noble life had gone into the education and training and development of the brother who was now to bring these gifts into fruition for the benefit of the world at large. Did he appreciate it all? Probably he did. But neither brother nor sister was prone to give the deepest feelings much expression in words.

Sunday they all walked to church together in the warm, quiet, September sunshine. This, too, was a pleasant exercise to Viola. Her own religious associations, never very regular, had been Episcopalian and rather high-church; but the congregational service, on that peaceful summer morning, with the windows open and

the buzz of the crickets outside, had something reserved and dignified about it which seemed to suit the people and the place. Here again she found fresh clues to Porter's character. The old stability, the rock-like determination of primitive New England, had come to him with all these inherited traditions of the early fathers.

In the afternoon he took her to walk over the hills to visit some of his childhood haunts. But it was impossible that they should not talk politics, for a time, at any rate.

"Your letters," Porter began, almost as soon as they were alone, "I cannot get used to them nor get over my wonder. Each is better than the last. How do you manage it? You must think about them all the time."

"I do," she answered simply. Then she went on to consult him about various details. "But," she said, when she had the information she wanted, "I thought last night somehow your tone did not sound quite so confident as usual. Was it because you were tired?"

"No, no, I'm never tired. I was confident, I am confident, too confident, perhaps. But — "

He hesitated, until she forced him to go on. "But?"

"But — well, Hinckley is certainly very strong."

"You don't think he will succeed in carrying the convention — for Dillworthy?"

"No, I don't think so. Smith is working hard, Burke is working, Joe Warren is work-

ing, Rooney is working. No, I believe we shall have it all as we want it. Yet Hinckley pulls so many wires, he keeps so quiet with it all. You can't tell where to find him, where to look for him even."

"That sort of thing wears on the nerves, of course," Viola answered, with quiet sympathy. "But we must not get discouraged. I believe with you that we shall come out right this time. But what if we don't? Can't we try again? And yet again? We have the idea with us always. It can't die. Every bit of work you do now is seed sown for the future, even if this time you fail. Courage is our motto, isn't it? Courage, courage, always courage!"

Her voice was tranquil, as she repeated the word, but tranquil with a firm resonance, an unfaltering resolution, which was redoubled in her dark eyes, as she looked at him steadily. And he seemed to behold in her calm, august, white figure the personification of all his ideals and of all his hopes.

"Yes," he murmured, "courage, courage! If mine should ever fail me, I shall know where to come for it."

Then, for the time, they dropped these matters and were silent or talked of things about them. First he took her to a round hilltop whence they could look off over the autumn landscape, the great fields of corn bending gently in the wind, the broad marshes with here and there a red maple flushing too early, the

lazy, long glitter of the river in the sunlight. There was the pond where as a boy he learned to swim, there the huge chestnuts which he pillaged with the first frost. On that long hill, half-hidden in the elms, he used to coast on winter nights under the moon. Little trivial bits of reminiscence, but they meant much to him and so they meant much to her. For every detail, no matter how minute, was helping her to understand the man, and so, she thought, to write the "Democrat" letters more effectively.

From the hill he led her down to the river-bank and along it by a narrow path winding in the thicket, till they came to a great rock, one side of which was washed by the water. On top of it the shrubs grew closely, making a quiet nook where you could sit unseen and watch the slow current rolling by perpetually and the dance of sunshine and shadow on the surface of the stream. Now and then the silence was broken by the swift, dazzling plunge of a kingfisher or the splash and chatter of passing canoes, many-coloured.

As they sat here, undisturbed, Porter told his companion of his youth — more intimately. It was here that he used to come and think of the future, dream of doing something in the world — vague dreams, yet, after all, even then taking the shape of present reality. For his dreams were always of being a leader among men, not of art, not of writing books or painting pictures. He knew that some achieved

glory in that way, but it meant little to him. What he wanted was to move great masses directly, to feel them respond to his voice and to his touch, to do some great action in the world, even if he perished in the doing of it — all shadowy, of course, all a boy's romantic castle-building; but such as it was it had come to him here on this great rock beside the stream he loved, and he remembered it as if it were yesterday.

Word by word almost — absently — as if he were thinking aloud — he gave her these details of the past, while she sat silent, now and then breaking off a twig and dropping it into the dark water below. Then suddenly he realized that he was saying what he had never said to any one, even to his sister, even to Margaret, and all at once he was aware that he loved this woman, who had come by such a strange device of fate — or Heath — so fully, so overpoweringly into his life. He loved her. Yet six months ago he had believed he could never love any woman again. He loved her. Yet certainly nothing in the world was more impossible than that she, with her traditions, her surroundings, her education, her opportunities, should ever love him. No, if he loved her, he must cease loving her. If he wished to keep her friendly influence, her invaluable sympathy, this nonsense talk of love must be crushed out and put away. He must be cold, reserved, distant, impersonal, friendly, as man to man.

From that time on he was impersonal, as man to man — or thought he was. And what was more important, she thought he was. For the moment she had taken alarm at the intimacy of his confidences, even when she found them fascinating. Then, when he deftly checked the intimacy of them and developed the impersonality, she scolded herself, as often before, for being foolishly sensitive on account of Heath's suggestions, and accepted the man to man attitude with joyful restoration of inhuman serenity.

As they walked homeward, she touched upon one phase of his confessions that had attracted her attention. It was odd that his youthful thirst for glory should have taken that special form; that success as an artist, as a writer should have been so indifferent to him. She herself would have rather preferred the artist's triumph of the two. Did it not seem perhaps more unalloyed, more purely permanent?

Possibly, he admitted; but she must remember that in those days his life was far removed from any thought or knowledge of art and artistic beauty as concrete things. It was different with him now. And he went on to say how much she had done for him in this direction also, how much she and her friends had enlarged his horizon and his interests; so that if ever there should come a lull in the tumult of political activities, he hoped to concern himself more than he had done with things that were

more real and more beautiful for being far away from the hurry and bustle and pettiness of common affairs. But in making this acknowledgment he kept the man to man attitude still before his eyes and was so tranquilly distant that no alloy of suspicion mingled with her wide contentment.

In the evening Porter was obliged to devote himself to his stenographer, so that Clara and Viola were left to entertain each other. Each dreaded it a little; but each was well satisfied with the result. Clara confided to her new friend all her long hopes and patient efforts for her brother's success. It was not only the mere worldly success she wanted, the brilliant climbing from one round of the political ladder to another, with no thought but his own glory, his own advancement. If this were all, she had rather he abandoned it altogether and lived quiet, earning his livelihood and little more in some humble, harmless calling. She wanted him to do good in the world. There was such need of it in politics, with corruption running riot everywhere and, as it seemed, everything going from bad to worse. She could not help believing that he had the gifts to do something, even if only a little.

And Viola, as she heard the quiet lady's quiet voice gently murmuring these hopes, almost as if they were prayers, grew keenly aware of the change that had been wrought in herself during the last few months. A short time ago she would

have listened civilly sceptical, wondering that any grown person should take such matters so seriously. Now she could echo Miss Porter in hearty enthusiasm. "Oh, yes, he will succeed. In the first place he has it in him to succeed. He was born to lead men, if ever a man was. And then he has the principle, which would be nothing without the gift of leadership, but with it will be everything."

So the two exchanged hopes and built up sympathy in the dim, cool, peaceful parlour. It would be idle to deny that Miss Porter, calm and self-contained as she was, all the more perhaps because she was calm and self-contained, felt some touch of natural jealousy at this new, great influence coming into her idol's life. Nor could it fail to be evident that Viola, for all her nobility and all her earnestness, belonged to a different world from that of Foxbridge. But Miss Porter was a woman to crush her jealousy and trample on her prejudices, where love and duty willed it. And when, at bedtime, she reviewed the evening and the past day, she thought of her brother, Viola, and the future, as she imagined it, with tranquil affection and even with joy.

CHAPTER XXVIII

About a week before the convention Porter was astonished to see Flitters walk into the office. During the last month or two that gentleman had manifested an interest in politics which his best friends had been unable to understand. He had remained in town almost continuously, had sought the company of Smith, Rooney, and even some of Hinckley's followers whom he knew, as he knew every one, had talked little — for him — and apparently listened a great deal. Now it appeared that he had something to say to Porter.

"Good morning, Buckingham," began the latter, with cheerfulness. "Anything in my line to-day?"

"Make it Flitters," the other answered, without a trace of gaiety in the quiet eyes. "That's what I am. Porter," he went on, declining an invitation to sit down, and moving slowly about, his straw hat pushed back on his head, with both hands in his pockets, "Porter, you think I'm a fool."

Polite gesture of denegation from the other side.

"Oh, yes, you do. And I am. And I'll tell

you why. Because I spend on trifles — that is to say, matters that don't concern me — thought and wit and effort that would make me a great man, if I spent them on myself. Do you suppose, just for the sake of making Flitters governor, I would watch and harken and ferret round as I have been doing the last month for you? The empire of the world wouldn't tempt me. That's what I call being a real fool, a Shakespearean fool, toiling and sweating like a slave over soap-bubbles and taking no thought for what the wise call the serious affairs of life."

"I'm sure I'm greatly obliged to you," Porter said, once more suggesting a chair, which was again declined.

"Obliged? What's that got to do with it? My point is just this. You haven't been getting ahead the last month as you ought. There's been lots of talk about you in the papers. The whole state is interested in the fight. But we can all see that the caucuses aren't sending you nearly so many pledged delegates as we expected; at any rate, as we should like. Why? I've been after that why, and I've found it. Porter," — here he spoke a little more slowly, but in the same light and casual manner — "that fellow Warren has sold you out to Hinckley. I've followed the thing up and there can't be a doubt. All your leakage has come in his department. I'm sorry I couldn't have told you earlier and sorry I can't give you proofs now. You'll have to find those for yourself. But you

can take a fool's word for the fact. Good morning."

He was outside the closed door and gone before Porter had a chance to think. Warren false? Warren? His old school fellow? Who had followed his fortunes steadily through everything? Impossible! Better evidence would be needed than the word of a fool. Yet it was true that Warren's work had shown very little result. He and Smith had divided the state between them for general canvassing of committees, delegates, etc., leaving the city to Rooney, and Smith had undoubtedly accomplished far more than his partner. But Warren had been always ready with reasons. It could not be. It could not be.

By and by Smith came in and Porter at once told him what Flitters had said and asked what it could mean. Smith was no great friend of Warren; but Porter knew that the labour man would not accuse anybody without grounds.

Smith took his time about answering. "Well," he said at length, "I can't prove anything, so I've kept still. I knew Warren was an old follower of yours and you trusted him. I did my work and let him do his; but between you and me I don't think much of the way he's done it. If Buckingham hasn't told you the real explanation, I can't guess at any other."

This was a serious state of affairs. "I'm sorry you couldn't have told me before," said Porter, after some thought; "but it was nat-

ural. I ought to have used my own eyes. But Joe! I trusted Joe. Well, we've got to look into things now — hard."

During that day and the next and the next they did look into things. And Monday morning — the convention was to meet on Thursday — Porter telephoned to Warren to be at the office early.

They greeted each other as cordially as usual, though Porter imagined he saw something not quite usual in his follower's long, stolid, impenetrable face.

"Joe," he began at once, in a voice very quiet, but very even and steady, "they tell me that you've lost your interest in the campaign and in me, that you've sold out to Hinckley and done what you could to ruin me. How is it?"

Joe kept his countenance stolid still, in spite of the keen eyes that were never off it. "It's a damned lie," he said. "I knew that Smith was bound to make trouble."

Porter's tone was exactly the same, as he continued. "This did not come to me from Smith — came from somebody else altogether. And it isn't a damned lie. I've looked into it enough now to know that, whatever the cause, you've been neglecting your work, left things to other men who didn't do them, drunk, and spent money, and let me and my affairs go to the devil. I trusted you, Joe."

Joe's countenance apparently would not support him any longer. He got up, thrust his

hands deep into his pockets, walked to the window, and stood looking out with his back to his chief. "You didn't trust me," he answered. "You threw me over. Do you suppose any man will take such a raking as I got about that Burke business? Do you suppose any man wants to be kept for the dirty work and nothing else? Do you suppose any man will see a feller like that Smith put over his head and made boss? I want to get ahead, too. I'm looking out for number one just as you are."

Porter had rarely heard so many words from that source, never so many spoken with such feeling. For a few moments there was silence. Warren continued to gaze from the window, his back immovable. Porter sat quiet in his chair, looking at vacancy. Finally he rose, walked over, and laid his hand on the other's shoulder — gently.

"Joe," he said. Joe started at the tone, as well he might. "Joe, I'm sorry. I guess I've neglected my old friends. I understand it all now. That's what bothered me. I couldn't understand. You remembered the days when we were boys together. You could swim better, and climb better, and play ball better. And for so many years we went on side by side. And then it began to seem to you that I was doing all the climbing. And you thought I had forgotten about those old times. Heaven knows I hadn't; but you thought so, and thought I was ready to drop you for anybody

else who would help me. And you felt sore. And things looked pretty cold. And you thought if I had so many others to help, I didn't need you. And one particularly bad day the devil came along. I guess I've sized it up pretty well, Joe, haven't I?"

Warren's right hand came out of his pocket now and found his friend's. "I haven't had a quiet minute since," was all he said.

"Well," answered Porter, with infinite sweet cheerfulness, "we won't have another word about it. It's all over."

"All over? And you sold out for good? But I'll do what I can, Mat, still. I'll work. God, how I'll work! I'll send Hinckley back the money."

"No," said the chief thoughtfully. "I don't think that will be the best way. You shall work. But not just now. I've got some ideas in my head. But I think, Joe, the best thing for you will be to clear out for a week — right off — to-night — Nova Scotia, say. We'll pass the word that you're sick and let your people report direct to me. When you come back, I'll give you work enough, if there's work for anybody."

"I'll do just what you want," was the humble answer. "I'd rather stay, though."

"I don't think it would be best. But, Joe, before you leave, you might give me any hints that may be useful. Of course the caucuses are over and our work will have to be done mainly on the unpledged delegates. You must know

where they stand, most of them, in your districts. How was it anyway? Did you agree to hand over so many votes?"

"Never. I wouldn't do that."

"Or couldn't?" The kindly smile that accompanied this showed — and was meant to show — that the speaker was not taken in, in spite of his generosity. "But I understand. You just agreed to let things slide. Well, now if you've got any pointers to give us — "

Warren sat down at the desk, looked over his note-books, and made out a number of memoranda, giving explanations with them. "There," he said, when he had finished, "I guess that'll help you some. But, oh, Mr. Porter," he added, with an extraordinary intensity of pleading in his hoarse voice, "won't you let me stay? There's lots I can attend to that nobody else can."

Porter's answer was gentle, but absolutely unyielding. "It won't do, Joe, this time. We shall have to get along without you. There'll be enough work later — I hope. And I'll give you all you want. Good-bye."

Warren shook the hand that was held out to him — wrung it, and left without another word.

CHAPTER XXIX

During the few days that remained Porter and his lieutenants did what they could to make up for Warren's treachery. Doubtful delegates were interviewed, reasoned with, influenced by every legitimate method, perhaps by some that were shady, though, if this was the case, Porter knew nothing of it. "Democrat" published an extra letter on Tuesday, giving a general summary of Porter's standpoint, hinting vaguely at unscrupulous means of opposition, and urging every delegate to do his duty by the state and the party as a whole, without regard to the schemes of politicians.

Hinckley cared nothing for "Democrat" letters, however, had no scruples, and did have money. And he used it — very quietly and effectively. So that when Porter, Smith, Burke, and Rooney came to review the situation Wednesday evening, although they were hopeful, they were far from confident.

"The papers have been sizing it up for a week," said Smith. "And I guess they've sized it up as well as we can. We've got a good third of the delegates instructed. Of those that are floating there'll be a good many for us — a hundred anyway, that I'm sure of."

"More," insisted Rooney. "There's more. There's over a hundred."

"Well, there ain't enough — sure. You admit that, don't you?" was Smith's dry comment.

"No," agreed Rooney, shaking his head. "There ain't enough — sure."

"But," put in Burke, "Hinckley's a good deal less sure of it than we are."

"That's so," said Rooney. "He ain't sure of it at all. There's a good deal less than a third pledged to Dillworthy."

But Smith again interposed his Jonah warning. "It ain't what's pledged. Hinckley's worked night and day and spent money like water. I don't know just what he's got up his sleeve — nor you don't."

Some little controversy followed as to this delegate and that. Lists were produced and gone over eagerly and Warren's name was once or twice mentioned in uncomplimentary fashion.

Meantime Porter sat quietly, watching his counsellors, but taking little part in the discussion. At length, when they had made their count and readjusted it and readjusted it again, he spoke. "Boys, I've got an idea that I haven't mentioned yet. I don't know how you'll like it."

They looked at him in wondering expectation. "Bully for the guvnor's idea," said Rooney.

"I'm going to talk to that convention," Porter went on.

At first none of them caught his point. "Talk to the convention?" repeated Burke. "It's never been done that I know of."

But when Smith had grasped the idea, he seemed to like it. "Because it never has been done is no reason why it shouldn't be. There's never been a candidate before that had anything to say. Go ahead. I'm with you. Of course, you mean after your name has been proposed?"

"Yes," said Porter. And he explained just what his plan was and gave them the outline of his speech.

"You're the man to do it," cried Rooney, with rubicund ecstasy. "I bet it knocks Hinckley silly."

Even Burke agreed, when he had thought it over. "It's bold," he remarked, "and you can't be sure how it'll work. But it's our line to be bold. Hinckley's been running things the old, old way, and if we want to beat him, we must work something different. We don't need many votes and it wouldn't surprise me a bit if your talk got what we need."

Thursday morning came and the convention met. Smith and Hinckley, with a few followers on each side, had had a long conference the day before to arrange preliminaries as to temporary chairmanship, appointment of committees, platform, etc. Each side expected trouble, but each side was anxious to avoid it and made conces-

sions. An impartial chairman was agreed upon and Smith expressed himself willing to accept a general platform urging reciprocity, strict control of corporations, and all the old standbys. This was Porter's policy and Smith had demurred in the beginning. "How can you make your fight on those chestnuts?" "I sha'n't," Porter answered. "I carry my platform in my pocket and shall pull it out when I need it. But the chestnuts won't do any harm. We'd better not have any row, till we come to the actual nomination."

Only one point Smith, by his chief's directions, did insist on, a resolution in favour of abolishing the governor's council. Hinckley at first objected, but when he found that the plank was based on quotations from that Democratic idol, William E. Russell, he gave in. "It won't hurt anyway," he said to one of his protesting supporters. "It's all academic, if you only knew what that means."

As a result of this very harmonious conference the convention opened as smoothly as possible. Hinckley called the assembly to order, the temporary chairman was elected by acclamation, the committees on credentials, on resolutions, etc., were duly appointed, and the recess necessary before permanent organization was taken. During this interval a last attempt to convert doubtful delegates was made by both sides; but it cannot be said that the result was perfectly satisfactory to either. Unquestion-

ably Porter's personal popularity was far greater than his adversary's; but there were other considerations besides personal popularity.

When the delegates reassembled, the temporary chairman was made permanent and the real business of the day began. No trouble occurred over the platform. All sides were ready to shout for safe platitudes, as usual. The abolition of the council meant nothing whatsoever to nine-tenths of those present; but the name of William E. Russell was received with ultra-Democratic vociferocity.

Then the nominations. Wingate, though he rarely meddled in active politics, had got himself made a delegate with the express object of presenting Porter's name to the convention. As the reputed author of the "Democrat" letters he was received with enthusiasm by at least part of the delegates, and his vigorous, straightforward, energetic speech was listened to with interest, while Porter's name was received as warmly as his most ardent admirer could have wished.

One of Hinckley's followers then nominated Dillworthy, making a skilful plea for old Democratic habits and traditions and urging the danger of sacrificing party principles to visionary notions and fads which could not be carried out in practice. Porter was not named nor even personally hinted at; but the speech was well planned and it told.

"Now is your chance," said Burke to Porter,

as they waited in a convenient private anteroom, where they could see and hear, without being heard or seen. "Now's your chance. Go in and win."

But at this critical point Hinckley sprang a little surprise. After the presentation of Dillworthy's name, the chairman made the appropriate formal pause to give opportunity for other nominations, although neither he nor the greater number of those present dreamed that any would be forthcoming. There was one, however. A well-known and much respected Methodist minister rose to present the name of Honourable Henry F. Stebbins.

"The devil!" cried Burke. "What does this mean?"

"Just one of Hinckley's moves, and a sharp one," was Porter's calm answer. "He's done it to draw from us on the first ballot, thinking that after that he can make sure of some of our pledged delegates for Dillworthy. I suspected that he was holding something back; but so am I."

Stebbins was a well-known Bostonian, who had been several times member of congress, was wealthy and popular, and had been often mentioned for governor, but was understood to have declined positively. This, the Methodist clergyman explained, was a mistake; or, at any rate, Mr. Stebbins had changed his mind, yielding to the arguments of his friends who pointed out that in the present somewhat strained condition

of affairs the appearance of an acceptable third candidate might settle all difficulties. The applause which greeted Stebbins's name showed that Hinckley's device was ingenious.

Once more the chairman made his official pause preliminary to ordering the ballot; and as he waited, there appeared upon the platform the quiet figure of Porter, asking permission to address the assembly. It was a second or two before even the Porterites who were not in the secret recognized their chieftain and greeted him with a tumult of enthusiasm. It was several seconds before the amazed Hinckley could pass the word to drown out this unjustifiable intruder, and then it was too late. The chairman had accorded his recognition, the audience had established a friendly relation with the speaker, and Porter, standing with his hand uplifted for silence, had acquired that magnetic control against which it is so difficult for even a well-organized opposition to contend.

I cannot give his manner, his simple, intense earnestness, so different from the empty rhetoric which had been heard before; therefore I do not attempt to give the whole of his speech. The platform, he said, was well enough, harmless generalities; but he thought this was a state convention; and he saw nothing in the platform, except the council plank, which had anything to do with the state. It all sounded like the work of men who were looking to Washington for their ideas and for their future. For

himself, he was looking to Massachusetts. The government in Massachusetts at present was better than that of many states, but they all knew that a man might spend a long day counting up the things that might be done to improve it. He believed that those things might be done by the governor, should at any rate be urged onward by the governor. The governor was the only man who could represent Massachusetts as a whole, while every legislator represented only the district he came from. The governor should come from the people and speak for the people. For everything he did he should be directly responsible to the people.

Then, leaving these abstract considerations, the speaker took a more personal tone and the ringing clearness of his voice filled every corner of the hall and touched the heart of every man in it. "And now," he said, "I see that you are thinking, 'Even if these things are true, it would be better for some one else to say them. Is it quite fitting, quite decent for him to come before us thus boldly and ask for the highest gift in the power of his fellow citizens to give?' In other words you have the old idea which we have heard so often, 'the office should seek the man, not the man the office.' That is, the most august dignity of the commonwealth should go flitting about seeking on whom it may alight, like a fly on a summer afternoon, buzzing carelessly into some wide-open mouth — or wide-open pocket. My friends, that old idea is based

on a delusion, a delusion which, if it is not dispelled, and quickly, will be fatal to our country and to the great experiment of democratic government, the delusion that office means not something to do, but something to get. Office is not a reward, it is a duty. Duty done brings its reward with it, as always, in this case the most glorious reward the world can give. But no man who is worthy of the duty thinks first of the reward. And that is why I dare to present myself before you asking the privilege of undertaking the most solemn duty that I know of anywhere. Others, many, may be more worthy of it. But they have not undertaken it. I will undertake it. I believe that those blots, those stains which rest upon the government of Massachusetts, as they rest, in less or greater measure, upon the government of all our states, not by the fault of any man or any party, but of the system, may be removed by changing the system, and I am ready to give my strength, my brain, my will, every power of body and soul, to bringing about that change, so that Massachusetts may be the best governed, the freest, the happiest, the most democratic community in the world. Gentlemen, it is on the strength of this resolve that I ask you to make me your candidate for the governorship."

During all this speech there was not one outburst of applause. There were none of those cheap points that manifestly call for it. But there was that unbroken, solemn hush which

makes you feel that a great orator is holding every ear intent upon his words. The hush lasted even for a second or two after the speech was over. Then the restrained feeling of the great assembly burst out in a roar which has rarely been equalled at a political gathering in Massachusetts.

It was long before the chairman could restore order sufficiently to proceed with the balloting. But when at last the vote was taken, Porter was found to have captured nearly all the delegates whose instructions did not oblige them to vote against him.

CHAPTER XXX

VIOLA had kept away from the convention; but Flitters had telephoned progress to her constantly and she had news of the nomination as soon as the chairman had announced it. So far it was settled then, the first great step was taken, the first great battle won. She sat down at her desk immediately and wrote the "Democrat" letter for Saturday, a Miriam's song of abounding exultation and triumph. Failure would not have meant defeat, she said, nor discouragement, nor one moment's abandonment of the unfaltering struggle; but success — and success achieved in such a notable way, snatched overwhelmingly from the very grasp of triumphant opposition — was a most inspiring augury for the final victory, not of any man, or of any party, but of a great, fertile, fruitful, renovating, democratic idea. Hitherto the idea had been, after all, only speculative, only academic. Now it had been given a real, political existence, a normal, corporate shape, which would serve as a rallying point for its friends and a terror to its foes. Surely, not only all Democrats, but all independent lovers of clean, honest, strong government would see the way clear before them from now until November.

It had been arranged that, if everything went well, Viola should receive the candidate and all his friends and all hers on the evening after the convention. Burke arrived first. During the past few weeks Viola had taken quite a fancy to the hearty Irishman, and had even gone so far as to call on his wife, a step which Flitters registered as the most astounding of all the expressions of growing democracy.

"The lieutenant-governor, I believe?" began the hostess, as she shook hands warmly.

"That's as may be; but it's of no consequence whatever. Oh, Miss Buckingham, you ought to have heard him. He took the whole crowd right in the hollow of his hand — and put them in the hollow of his heart."

"Hinckley?" asked Viola, with gentle irony.

"Well, Hinckley, I don't know. Hinckley's a hard nut. Still, Hinckley will come into line now. He must. He can't help seeing that Porter's a big man. He is a big man, Miss Buckingham. His heart is big enough to take in even Bob Hinckley."

"And his head big enough to take him in too?" was the sympathetic inquiry.

"Oh, a dozen Hinckleys. That trick of speaking — and just at the right moment — Hinckley never would have thought of anything so simple as that. We shall live to see Porter president, Miss Buckingham. Mark my words."

"I do — like a prophet's."

Here others began to arrive, Flitters and Flora, Wingate, then Constance, who had not been near Viola since the famous lot-drawing at Falmouth and who had now been invited to spend the night for purposes of explanation and reconciliation, if necessary. Flora had communicated to Viola her suspicions of Constance's feeling for Flitters and they coincided so exactly with Viola's own that she was determined to look into the matter as far as possible.

"So glad you could come, dear," Viola said, taking both her guest's hands affectionately.

But Constance's eye passed beyond her hostess to Flitters and Flora who were together at the piano. "Yes," she said, without enthusiasm, "I was glad to come."

Then a group of other girls appeared, Laura and Grace and Ruth. Then Eugene McCarthy. Then one or two of Porter's political associates. And Viola was obliged to turn her attention from immediate friends to the judicious assorting of comparative strangers.

Wingate naturally attached himself to Ruth, and listened with interest to her slightly hoarse-voiced enthusiasm over the events of the day.

"Oh, Mr. Wingate, wasn't it splendid? I would have given anything to go; but Viola advised me not. She said the crowd would be noisy and dirty, but I don't mind noise and dirt in a great cause, do you? Think of Mr. Porter's getting up there with them all against him — well, not all, of course, but so many of

them — and winning them over just by speaking. I can imagine how he looked. I think he's so handsome, that is, so distinguished looking, so earnest, as if he believed every word he says and were bound to make you believe it. And he did make all those people."

Wingate listened and thought he had rather hear her speak than Porter. He wished, too, that he had gifts of earnestness and spell-binding and all that sort of thing. Then he saw McCarthy coming towards them and wished other things distinctly discourteous. He would have moved away; but he knew that Ruth would not care if he did; therefore he didn't.

"I'm so glad to see you, Eugene," Ruth cried. "Just think, we haven't met since that odd evening at Falmouth."

"Odd evening at Falmouth?" repeated Wingate, who felt that he must keep in the conversation or leave.

"Oh, yes," said Ruth. "You weren't there, were you? It was such fun!"

Then she gave a vivid account of that interesting occasion, lot-drawing and all. Wingate listened, but heard not. Her quick speech and nimble gesture were more to him than what she told and still more was the evident fact that though she spoke to him, she was talking to Eugene. Eugene must confirm her recollections and supply her deficiencies. Eugene was everything and he, Wingate, was nothing. Yet Eugene was a little, insignificant, commonplace

fiddler — no more. It was so curious the way these matters worked.

"Now those three are too old to be fooled by Cupid, don't you think?" said Flitters to Flora, as they leaned against the piano, side by side, turning over new songs and gazing at the company.

"The older, the more easily fooled, I believe; when Cupid cares to take the trouble," was the sage reply.

"Perhaps so. I've really had so little to do with Cupid myself. And you?"

"Who, I? And Cupid? Look at my dusty brown shock of hair and the queer lines in my face and the awkward angles all over me, as I look at them in the glass daily, with agony, and then don't talk about me and Cupid."

Flitters turned and took a cool survey of the indicated object of contemplation. Then he said, with slow impertinence, "I've always heard that Cupid, in applying his torch, considered rather the combustible than the esthetic. Witness Eugene there, with whom you certainly compare favourably as regards personal attractions. In fact, I find your speaking coiffure, your mask of gaiety, and your crisp, definite gestures, rather piquant. Compare yourself with Constance, for instance. Now, of the two, for my part — "

"Oh, Constance!" Flora interrupted. "Cupid has got his whole grip on her. You'd

better look out: there's trouble brewing for you from Constance."

"I don't think so," was the careless answer.

But just then the hero of the evening entered and left no room for further personalities. The instant he appeared a universal cheer went up, which seemed to fill the whole house and must have flowed out upon the mild decorum of September Beacon Street. And Flitters, jumping on to the piano-stool, initiated a thunderous rendering of the "Mosquito" chorus, "Hurrah for Billy the guv'nor."

Porter took his honours serenely, if not meekly, and bowed acknowledgment. Then he shook hands with his hostess, who had stepped forward to meet him. All eyes were upon the two. He knew it, and she knew it, and Viola felt a slight increase of colour in her cheek, which vexed her. Otherwise their mutual salutation was as tranquil as if they two were in the room alone.

"It was a noble, glorious, worthy, well-earned victory," she said. "All we Porterites are proud and we know it is only a sure stepping-stone to the other and more important victory later."

Porter bowed. But bowing was not enough. "Speech! Speech!" shouted Flitters, Burke, Wingate, everybody.

"I've spoken enough for one day," Porter protested. "Besides, this is a purely social occasion."

Nevertheless, he did say a few words further, addressed chiefly to Viola, conveying his feeling that her support and that of her friends was the greatest possible testimony to the importance of his cause, and his hope that, if he did succeed, he should be able to justify their confidence. In concluding he suggested that Mr. Buckingham would probably be able to say something more appropriate to the occasion.

"More appropriate to you," cried Flitters, nothing loath to take up his turn. "What do you mean by this humility? Don't you know that the one thing a politician may not be, is modest? He may be generous, he may be loyal, he may be intelligent, he may be honest, he may even, in rare cases, be a gentleman. Modest he cannot be."

"Who said I was modest?" interjected Porter, with entire calmness.

"Not you. You didn't even pretend to be, which is an old trick, a common trick, though it often goes. You *were* modest, which is damnable. Now, my very good friends, let us put the modest gentleman and his concerns completely out of sight for an hour or two and eat and drink and enjoy ourselves."

So they did; and for the most part politics were not mentioned, though now and then whispers were exchanged in a corner.

"I haven't thanked you yet for the hint you gave me last week," said Porter to Flitters.

"It was of immense service — and so out of your line."

"I have no line," was the contemptuous answer. "You creatures with a line go like bumblebees, first a blind knock-down rush in one direction, then the same thing in another — all useless. I — flit. I happened to flit your way. Don't thank me."

When the guests were gone, trailing their wild gaiety after them, Viola sat down quietly with Constance.

"I've been nearly a month in town," said the former. "I hoped to see you before."

"Did you?" was the cold answer. "I have been very busy."

"Of course, if you've been busy — But I trust there's been nothing else to prevent your coming, nothing that happened — in any way — at Falmouth."

Constance spoke without looking up from her hands which were busily engaged with her fan. "What should there be?"

"I don't know why there should be anything. Only I wondered."

There was a moment's silence. Then Constance opened and shut her fan sharply and looked at Viola with angry brown eyes. "I don't think I'm clever enough for your set," she said.

"Cleverness is nothing," answered Viola, gentler than usual. "I don't think I am clever in

the sense you mean. Sometimes cleverness is worse than nothing. I hope you do not feel that any of my friends have meant to be uncivil."

"I don't know what they mean."

"I could not help fancying," Viola went on, slowly, but without hesitation, "that perhaps George's attentions — he is too careless about such things. That business of drawing lots was so stupid."

Constance woke up now. "Stupid! Oh, no, he's not stupid. But of course I am. And you think I've made a goose of myself. And you think I'm in love with him. Well, what if I am? Didn't he give me reason to be, walking with me, and talking with me, and asking me to play to him? He has a way of looking at you — Well, never mind all that. I don't know why I came here. Just to see him flirting with that Flora Chantrey, great scrawny thing, with her clothes thrown on to her any way, and her dirty brown wopse of hair."

"But, Constance," interrupted Viola, infinitely distressed, "you take all George's jests so seriously."

"His jests!" Her pale face was really flushed for once, her eyes almost wild. "Let him keep his jests for those that understand them. I won't be one of his jests. You've been good to me. I don't deny that. You're different from the others. But they're always after what you call jests. They're cruel, they're

heartless, they're spiteful — and I'll tell you what I think — I think they're all stupid. I'm going now. It was kind of you to ask me, but I don't want to stay where I'm reminded of them. Good-bye."

And in spite of all Viola's protests and endeavours to detain her for the night in accordance with their original arrangement, she insisted on getting together her belongings and departing in a cab, though it was close to midnight.

"I don't blame you," were her last words to Viola. "But I don't want to see any of your set again, above all not her — nor him."

As the cab drove off Viola realized that you cannot always judge a day, no matter how golden, till it is ended.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Republican convention met on the day after the Democratic, and Heath was nominated with very little opposition. He was not in every respect a popular candidate. Many old Republicans complained that he was not the sort of governor Massachusetts had had in the past. But he was rich, he was aristocratic, he spoke well and was agreeable, when he chose to be so, and he had the right men behind him. As his uncle said, if he would not make a good governor, at least there was nothing better in sight.

"Well, Dudley," began Wood, as the two met in the latter's office the morning after the nomination. "It's up to you to show all there is in you."

"Not to me," was the cool reply. "To you. I'm only the figurehead now."

"Hardly," answered Wood. "After January first you may be a figurehead, if you want to; but till then you've got to work. It's speak, speak, speak, till you drop. No common hustling will beat Porter. I can tell you that."

"Porter has you all so scared he can walk right in over you, without taking any trouble, I believe."

"Is any one more scared than you?"

"I'm not scared. I don't care enough."

"Oh, drop that," ejaculated the uncle, with much annoyance. "And let's get down to business."

So they did. And Wood found to his satisfaction, as always, that when his nephew threw off his superficial cynicism and faced a practical question, no man had a clearer grip. There must be speakers here, there, and everywhere, one senator must speak, perhaps both. Money must be found and used without stint. Well, it could be and should be. Newspapers must be bought and employed in editorials, letters, advertisements, everything.

"Your favourite scheme in regard to Porter and my cousin?" asked Heath, with a sneer.

"All in good time," answered the uncle, unmoved. "He's piling the thing up. Just think of her visiting him in Foxbridge. I can use that when I get to it. Then there are those 'Democrat' letters. We must put a sharp fellow on to those."

"It will take a sharp fellow," agreed Heath cordially. "I like those letters. By George, they almost persuade me."

"If you don't look out, they'll do worse than persuade you." Wood was silent for a moment, running over his memoranda.

"Anything more to be done with Hinckley?" Heath inquired. "Or do you feel that your money was thrown away?"

"No, no!" answered the Republican chieftain. "I haven't a doubt but Hinckley did his level best to deliver the goods, for his own sake more than for ours."

"Well, can't he deliver another lot now?"

Wood's red forehead contracted with the effort of thought. "I don't like to tackle him," he said finally. "If he can stick a knife into Porter quietly, I believe he'll do it. But he can't take any risks on flying the track. The party's the whole thing to Hinckley — got to be."

So the two leaders ended their conclave and as a result of it things began to move throughout the old Bay State in an unusual fashion. The voice of the spellbinder was heard in the land, and big newspapers and little threw ink and mud over each other and everybody else with inexhaustible joviality. Only Wood, as he had hinted, did not at first let loose his whole battery in regard to Viola and Porter. A chance shot here and there carried out his intentions for the present.

On the Democratic side the activity was even greater than on the Republican. So far as Hinckley was concerned, Porter was secretly inclined to agree with Wood's opinion, at any rate as to the chairman's personal inclinations. But, on the surface, his conduct was irreproachable. He and his friends seemed to take hold of the work with zeal. Meetings were arranged everywhere. Porter was to speak all over the

state. Money was solicited and was forthcoming in considerable quantity, independently of the efforts of Wingate, who assured Porter in confidence that he could command almost any amount that might be needed.

But undeniably the "Democrat" letters were getting to be more and more a prominent element of the campaign. Everybody was reading them and talking of them. The vigour, the clearness of the style, the direct logic of the ideas, brought Porter's position within the grasp of thousands who in general regarded politics as matter indifferent or detestable. The Republican attempts at reply were often clever and ingenious, but rarely convincing. Almost all of them made the mistake of assailing Porter personally, not only with hints of his new social connection, but with general insinuations as to his political purposes. Of these "Democrat" took very little notice, disposing of them with a brief word which brought out in burning clearness the petty nature of such attacks.

Various conjectures were still brought forward as to the authorship of the letters. Wingate was the favourite; but those who knew Wingate best were commonly ready with the friendly remark that they did not believe he had it in him. If not Wingate, who?

Porter, at any rate, could answer the question, and the letters certainly meant a thousand times more to him than to any one else. Each one was a new revelation of the author's understand-

ing of his idea. Long as he had meditated on it and lived with it, often as he had turned it over in every conceivable connection, her handling seemed to give it new significance and vitality even for him. And with his gratitude for such sympathy, his personal feeling, his now admitted love, had grown more and more rapidly. It was not the absorbed subjection of sex to sex, entertained with humiliation and cherished with self-contempt, which had formed so large a part, if not the whole, of his love for Margaret. Viola now seemed to him more beautiful, more feminine than Margaret, of an ampler, nobler, purer femininity. But the attraction to her was not only that of sex to sex, but of unsexed spirit to spirit. In living with her, in working with her, there would be no abnegation, no limitation, every pulse of love would mean a pulse of freer, stronger, richer spiritual life. And as he read the letters in the light of this feeling, he began to permit himself the question whether, after all, her own attitude was so absolutely impersonal as he had thought it. Could she enter so perfectly into his head and not a little into his heart? Could she —?

Her letter of Saturday, October seventh, came upon him when he was most busy with these interrogations. It was to the full effective as any before, and after dwelling upon it all that day and quoting a considerable part of it in his speech that night, when Sunday evening came, he decided that the least he could do was

to call and thank her. If — if —. But there were no "ifs." Anything beyond bare thanks should be left to accident and circumstance. He was free as air and so was she. There was no reason in the wide world why they should not marry. As for the idle malice of Heath and his set of political scandal-mongers, no man who was worthy to make himself a place in the world would be deterred from doing anything that was not dishonourable by the chatter of such as they.

He found one or two callers with Viola; but they speedily departed and the two were left alone. One of the subtlest psychologists who ever lived tells us that "A man, my good sir, has seldom an offer of kindness to make to a woman, but she has a presentiment of it some moments before." It would be too much to say that Viola suspected what was going on in her visitor's mind; but she was instantly aware of something uncommon, and her own manner was therefore not quite natural, as she accepted his thanks for her last letter and his enthusiastic praise of the tact and delicacy which she had shown in all of them.

"It is pleasant to be appreciated," she said. "But you exaggerate my part. Let a person once believe thoroughly, heartily, in a noble cause, and all these gifts, such as they are, will be added unto him."

Then she went on, with perhaps a somewhat unnecessary haste, to ask one string of political

questions after another. His speaking last night, was it successful and effective? But of course it was. Had he seen Heath's speech also made last night? Clever, of course, but so hollow and artificial, and thoroughly false. Surely it was not possible the people could be imposed on by such things? And Hinckley, was he wholly to be trusted?

So she talked, and he listened, and answered when it was necessary; but his answers were so brief, so insufficient, so lacking in his usual clear vigour, that at last she found herself embarrassed and hardly able to go on. Yet she hesitated — why, she did not know — to ask the reason of his abstraction.

He did not leave her long in doubt. "Miss Buckingham," he began. She had heard many tones of his voice before, speaking of many things; but she had never heard that tone. "Miss Buckingham, of course you remember what you told me at Falmouth of Heath's schemes and plans?"

"Yes," she answered, shrinking back in her deep chair, her hands lying in her lap. "Yes."

But he grew bolder now he had begun, leaned forward more earnestly as she shrank back. "Is it, can it be only my idea, my cause, that you believe in — love?"

"Oh, Mr. Porter, don't!" she cried, with an expression of pain on her pale face, stretching out one hand involuntarily as if to put aside

this new, distressing thought. "Don't, I beg of you."

"But I must," he persisted, firm and quiet, though he saw her trouble and did not know how to interpret it. "I must. I have got clear with myself in the last few days and I can't go on making believe any more. I have told myself that I must look upon you as a friendly journalist, an ardent political follower, a faithful friend and companion. Oh, a *deus* — or *dea* — *ex machina,* if you like, anything but a woman to be loved. Well, I can't. You are a woman — and I love you. But it isn't mere love. Isn't it the rarest of things that love should come with such perfect sympathy, such complete understanding, such an absolute oneness of desires and aims? That is, my love. I haven't dared to ask myself whether you loved me. Why should you? How can you?"

After the first attempt to stop the torrent, Viola had sat motionless, looking, with troubled eyes, into vacancy. But now it seemed necessary to speak. "It isn't that," she said, in a broken voice, "it isn't any question of you or me. It must not be. It cannot be."

"Why?"

"It doesn't seem right. We are not children, to blend a great cause with childish love-making."

"Not children's love — man's and woman's love. Have you never divined mine?"

"Never," she said, as it seemed, sincerely; but she added, "I would not. And then — only last spring — Margaret Ferguson."

It was his turn to shrink now. "I know. How often I have blamed myself! But you don't realize how different it is. That love — worked against — all my ideals. This love works with them, makes my nature larger, fuller, riper, on every side of it."

She listened, in the deepest thought, her eyes turned from vacancy to him. "I can't admit it, can't recognize it," she said. "I have lived my life thirty years for myself; as I thought, past all the trouble of these love infatuations. Self was never enough for me, yet I found nothing worth giving it up for. Then a great ideal came to me. I have worked for it, given myself up to it, with all the strength I had saved and stored for so long. It was a consecration, as holy as a nun's to her other-worldliness. Now you ask me to blend it all with love, just common, human love, which I have always half-despised. It seems an utter profanation." She clasped her hands and gazed at him in an agony of mute appeal.

Yet through it all he noticed that she did not say she did not love him and as he answered her there was a strange, grave exultation in his voice. "Just common human love," he repeated, "beautiful and not to be despised, because it is common and human. Viola, you have taught me so many things, shown me so

much that is fine and beautiful in ways remote from the common passage of human feet. Haven't I perhaps done just this one little thing for you, shown you that what is common may be lovely, not in spite of, but because of its commonness? Instead of profaning the cause, it seems to me that love would enrich and ennoble it, just as, on the other hand, the cause would sanctify love."

She made no answer and for a long time they sat silent, while the clock ticked and the city noises rumbled and resounded far away. When at last she spoke, her voice was gentler even than usual. "I can't find myself in it all. It seems to me impossible. Will you do one thing for me — forget this utterly, till the election is over? Then we shall have time to think it out in peace. Until then I can't. Will you promise me?" She rose and extended her hand as she asked the question, evidently meaning that he should leave her.

Loath as he was, he could hardly refuse. Standing close in front of her, with her hand in his, he murmured, "I promise." Then he pressed the hand passionately to his lips and was gone.

CHAPTER XXXII

"I RATHER think I shall call on Viola Buckingham," remarked Margaret Heath one morning to her husband.

"I rather think you won't, if you consult my wishes," was the decided reply.

"By all means let us consult your wishes. Any reason to offer?"

"Aren't my wishes enough?"

"Well, no, since you ask me, they aren't. How often do you consult mine?"

There was a silence, while the husband sipped his hot coffee and the wife crumbled a bit of muffin in her fingers. The wife spoke first.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"About what? Oh, about Viola. I have answered you."

"Very well. Then I shall go."

The husband set his coffee down too hard — and spilled it. "Margaret, why should you do anything of the kind? Don't you understand decency? This isn't decency. In the middle of a hot campaign — for the wife of one candidate to visit the headquarters of the other side!"

"The headquarters of the other side," repeated Margaret thoughtfully, still crumbling.

"I didn't know it had gone so far as that. But that is all politics. I care nothing whatever for politics. Miss Buckingham is an acquaintance of mine. I am curious to see her just now. And, Dudley, you mentioned decency. You can't think how amusing that is — between you and me."

She leaned both round, brown arms, sleeveless to the elbow, on the table, rested her chin on them and gazed at him, half in coquetry, half in hatred.

But he cared for neither the hatred nor the coquetry and there was only indifference and impatience in the glance he gave her back. "You persist in doing this thing — when I ask you not?" he inquired.

Still in the same attitude she answered, cold and slow. "I may. If I do, it will be chiefly because you ask me not."

He swallowed his coffee and left the room without another word, and she watched him go, her attitude and look unchanged.

That very afternoon she had herself driven to Viola's and found her at home alone. They had not met since Margaret's marriage and surveyed each other curiously. "Handsomer and more cynical than ever," thought Viola, as her eye ran over the trim, plump figure in the golden-brown velvet dress, with a heavy black hat shading the brilliant eyes. And Margaret noted a change in Viola as well. "What is it?" Margaret asked herself. "Is she less haughty

or more? A queen? Of Democrats? Is it all Mat's doing?"

While they thought, they talked however — quite differently.

"My husband forbade my coming here," said Margaret, after the first greetings were over and the two were seated, facing each other.

"Indeed?" Viola's answer indicated polite curiosity, nothing more.

"Oh, yes. He is so full of politics."

"Not unnaturally," the hostess interrupted.

"You think so? Well, perhaps, for a man. Fortunately women are above such things and can enjoy a clearer social atmosphere."

Viola made no comment on this, simply leaned quietly back in her chair and waited; so the visitor went on. "Dudley thinks, in fact he said that you have quite a political *salon* here — are almost the centre of everything that is opposed to him. Absurd, isn't he?"

"Well," answered Viola, still leaning back, still untroubled. "I don't know about the *salon* part of it."

"But that's the best part of it," Margaret went on, eager in her words, but cold and cynical in her manner. "The *salon* — if one could have it — would be worth while. But fancy a *salon* of Democrats!"

"Or of Republicans."

"Just so. Or of Republicans. Then you do admit that you are a centre of opposition?"

This with the inconceivable impertinence which no one better understood.

But Viola cared as little for her impertinence as the moon for a spitting firework. "Of progress, I should like to be. Your people represent the opposition."

Margaret fell back with a little play gasp. "Excuse me," she murmured. "But you have changed so. I can't seem to think of you and radical politics together."

Viola smiled. "I'm sorry to impose such a mental strain upon you. But if you take it quietly, perhaps the image may become acclimated in time."

"Of course," went on the visitor, "I can understand ambition. It is pleasant to rule, pleasant to feel one's self the pulse of the machine, pleasant to stand behind and think that all these contemptible political puppets are running at one's beck and call. There's a real woman's part to play in all that. Only I never should have thought you were the woman to play it."

"How little we understand even those we think we understand best," was the calm reply. Then Viola, still calm, as if she were imparting a recipe for cake, went on to say a few things. "Do you know, Mrs. Heath, I'm not that kind of woman at all. I'm not cherishing any ambitions nor trying to move any puppets. A great idea has come into my life and changed the whole course of it. I've come to believe in

the people, to think that the working out of democratic government is the secret of the future, the true way that the world is to be saved — politically, — if it is to be saved. Such an idea does alter one's character, no doubt."

The lips were Viola's, but through them Margaret heard a voice not Viola's, Porter's, only Porter's, and the voice meant far more to her than the things that were uttered. Who can question that Viola knew it would be so?

But whatever agitation Mrs. Heath may have felt, she showed none, unless by the added coldness of sarcasm in her tone. "How very odd!" she exclaimed. "Of course girls in college often take up enthusiasms in that way."

Viola kindly completed the idea. "But at our age enthusiasm seems out of place. To be sure. Yet, do you know, the enthusiasms of youth, I sometimes think, are the best thing to keep us young."

"Now from a merely cosmetic point of view I've often thought the contrary. Enthusiasm makes wrinkles."

"Wrinkles on the face, perhaps; but it smooths out wrinkles in the heart."

"Ah, but men don't see the wrinkles in the heart."

"That's true," answered Viola, with an air of profound reflection. "I hadn't thought of that."

These abstractions, however, were not what Margaret was after. She returned to politics.

"To think of your being a Democrat," she said. "A radical. I can't get over it. Though, of course, they do say that the bitterest radicals always come from the aristocracy."

"I don't come from any aristocracy. And I hope I sha'n't be bitter."

But Margaret paid no attention. "The associations must be the worst of it, I should think," she went on. "Of course Democrats all drink — and their personal habits must be so — unpleasant."

"Of course," agreed Viola, with much cheerfulness. "I try to bear it as well as I can."

"And then, worst of all, to have no chance of success. I take so little interest in politics; but to be a Democrat in Massachusetts has always seemed to me pathetic."

"Perhaps if you took more interest in politics, you would realize that the day is coming when it may not be so pathetic, when the pathos may even be on the other side."

Margaret had not mentioned Porter as yet, but this seemed to her to be the time. She sighed a little. "How completely he has — hypnotized you, hasn't he?"

The suggestion was taken up almost before it was out of her mouth. There was no feinting, no pretence of surprise or uncertainty. "Oh, yes. Isn't he a wonderful man? I believe in his ideas. He has explained them to me so patiently. But I believe most of all in him. He has the nature that wins, don't you think

so? But then, considering who your husband is, you can't think so. I'm sorry. After all, wasn't it you who would talk politics?"

"Dear me, don't apologize," was the cool reply. "Of course I talked politics. It seems to be in the air here. And naturally women believe in the success of their — husbands. Still — "

But the sentence was broken off by the entrance of visitors. They were somewhat amazed at finding Mrs. Heath, and their efforts to conceal their amazement showed it. But this was exactly what Margaret liked, and she talked more than ever, darting her sharp wit right and left into the trim draperies of propriety.

Then other visitors arrived, men and women. Then Porter. A dozen pairs of eyes watched the hostess as she greeted him; for by this time their relations were matter of some public curiosity, though no one could hint at anything indecorous or in any way imply an instant's failure in dignity on the part of either. Nor was there anything to feed curiosity on this occasion. They met with unheightened colour and untroubled voice. And when they had exchanged salutations, they each turned to some one else. Only, in a few moments, Porter, explaining that he had simply called to make some necessary inquiry, made it and took his leave.

The occasion exactly fell in with Margaret's wanton perversity of mood. When Porter appeared, she had bowed to him and said a civil

word, also under curious general observation. Nothing more was required. But when he rose to go, the spirit of mischief put it into her head to go with him. Exhaustless in ingenuity of tact, when she so willed it, she managed her adieus in such a fashion that he could neither hasten away in advance nor lag behind; and as the servant closed the great front door, they stood on the broad sidewalk of Beacon Street together.

Porter was keenly aware that the situation was ridiculous, and could not be too grateful that the fast falling twilight made them less recognizable than they would otherwise have been. He stepped forward quickly to assist his tormentor into the waiting carriage, only anxious to get rid of her; but she stepped forward more quickly still.

"Drive home," she said to the coachman. "I am going to walk."

The carriage was gone, almost before Porter knew it, and Margaret stood looking at him and laughing her hard, cruel laugh. "Of course I take it for granted you walk with me," she said.

"Mrs. Heath," he began, in remonstrance, at the same time moving along beside her, for it was impossible to stand there and dispute the point, "Mrs. Heath, what can you be thinking of?"

"Of you," was the short answer. "But don't call me Mrs. Heath."

"Don't you understand," he continued to urge, "that of all people in the world I am the last whom you ought to be seen with — for every reason?"

"I care nothing for reasons," she burst out, with the same wayward petulance. "I should like to walk with you and to have you walk with me. Under the circumstances you can't very well leave me to go home in the dark. But what cowards these politics make of a man. Do you know, only this morning Dudley was talking to me about decency! Think of it! Dudley and decency!"

Porter did think of it. This man, whose name she could not associate with decency, was her husband, had been her husband only four months. Doubtless, if she had married another husband, her feeling by this time would have been the same. On the whole, it was certainly better to be the one she rejected than the one she chose. But he said nothing of all this; only walked rapidly beside her, wishing with all his heart that he were walking somewhere — anywhere — else.

She was not disposed to silence, however. "I wanted to talk to you," she said, hurrying her speech, careless, defiant. "And I didn't know when I could get another chance. I wanted to tell you that I regret it all now. I made a mistake, a fool's mistake. When I look back — and look forward, I see that you are the real big man and the one I have married is paste-

board, shoddy, cheap, shallow, worthless, ready to sacrifice me and everything else to the wretched success which he hasn't character enough to win by any sacrifice. Oh, yes, I see it all now — Well, why don't you speak?" She turned half towards him, looked up, and the light they were passing struck fire in her eyes. "Why don't you thank me? Why don't you say you will be only too glad to take me now, as I am, a little shopworn? Oh, don't worry. I wouldn't come to you, if you wanted me. I wouldn't even have spoken, if I hadn't known you wouldn't want me. I am not quite such a fool as that amounts to — not for decency's sake, but for the sake of common sense. You don't want me. I know that well enough. But that you should want that tall skeleton we've just parted from, that wax figure of a woman, who dabbles in politics to please you and thinks she has ideas! Should a man come to a woman for ideas? Ah, well. It's all over now. I've said what I want to say. Go!"

She stopped short, as she saw he hesitated, and stood directly facing him in the middle of the sidewalk. Two or three passers-by looked and wondered.

"Mrs. Heath," he began, stammering, "Margaret — "

But she interrupted him at once. "You've nothing to say. What can you say? Will you go?"

He paused a second, tried again to speak, then lifted his hat and went.

Margaret's day was neatly finished by a midnight interview with her husband.

"I heard of your disgraceful conduct this afternoon," said he, entering her dressing-room, when she had come in from the theatre.

"Did you, indeed?" she asked, stretching out her feet to the fire, her skirt raised just a little.

"I did, indeed, and your walk with Porter to crown it. Have you no sense of decency?"

"Lots. If I hadn't, how could I get such pleasure from outraging it?"

"I know well enough you care more for Porter's little finger than you do for the whole of me."

She nodded, looking up at him from her comfortable position. "That's true enough. But don't worry. I sha'n't forget my wifely duties. I'm not a fool. But isn't he a big man, Dudley? You're such a pigmy, such a trim whipper-snapper, such a tawdry mass of shallow decency, beside him. Oh, if I had had my wits about me, what a pair we should have made. And now he's taken up with that tall, pale woman, that ghost of a woman!"

"Yes," he said, with a flavour of triumph. "He cares nothing more for you anyway. That's one thing sure. And all my doing."

"Your doing?"

"Well, it was Uncle William's scheme. I

never believed it would work; but I carried it out." Then, with jealous delight, he told her how he himself had first brought Viola and Porter together, first laid the foundation of the wall that had grown up between his wife and her former lover.

But she chose to look rather at the political aspect than at the personal. "What fools!" she cried. "What a man's device! Heavy-headed, thick-witted. So like your uncle and you — not to foresee that she would marry him."

"I don't foresee it now," answered Heath sulkily.

"But I foresee it for you, then. She will marry him, she will, she will! Now, good night. And in future, if you want me to treat decency with any respect, don't mention it to me."

CHAPTER XXXIII

As the campaign went on, Porter's vague dissatisfaction with Hinckley tended to increase. There was no definite ground of complaint. All necessary arrangements seemed to be attended to satisfactorily and to run smoothly. The money which Wingate raised in abundance seemed to be judiciously expended. Yet Hinckley's attitude was cold. He did his work without enthusiasm. "The party has decided," he appeared to say, "I am the party's slave. What more can I do than I am doing?"

Wingate appreciated this and grew restive. So did Smith and Burke. Finally Porter determined to put an end to it, if possible, at least to arrive at some understanding; and he arranged an interview with Hinckley, who in consequence came to Porter's office on the morning of Saturday, October twenty-first.

"Good day, Mr. Hinckley," began Porter, with his usual cordiality. Then, as soon as his visitor was seated, he went right into the matter in hand. "I asked you to come here, because I thought we needed a little talk."

"I've thought so for some time myself," was the genial answer.

"Exactly. Now I haven't a word of fault to find with the way you are conducting the campaign. Everything has been done as it ought to be done. And yet — somehow I feel that your heart isn't in it."

Hinckley smiled, with perfect apparent frankness. "Mr. Porter," he said, "the first lesson one learns in politics — very quickly — is how and when to lie. The second is learned only after a long apprenticeship — how and when to tell the truth. I've been in the business thirty years and I'm beginning to learn the second lesson. This is one of the times for telling the truth. You feel that my heart isn't in your campaign. I will answer you with absolute sincerity and say it isn't."

"Thank you," Porter replied; and his eyes showed he meant it. "Now we shall get on. Will you tell me why your heart isn't in it?"

"That's what I'm here for. I've learned the trade of politics as it is, and I don't like idealists and reformers. I believe things in this country, in any democratic country, must be done by parties. Discipline and order come first. The old traditions have got to be respected. I don't deny that you're a big man; but I suspect in some ways you're too big. And I'm afraid of you."

This was said with a smile that seemed kindly and was received with another of the same quality. "Do you know, I'm only afraid I'm not big enough. But big or little, don't

you think an idealist — as you say — may do his work within party lines?"

"He may, but I don't trust him. He's glad enough to at first. Nobody talks party more earnestly than he, till he's booted and spurred and well in the saddle. Then you come to a rough bit of country, and — pft — he shows all his faithful followers a clean pair of heels."

"You are rather figurative in your language, but I think I understand you," answered the leader, again smiling. "I don't hesitate to say, however, that I am as firm a believer in party as you are. I entirely agree that a government like ours can't be run except on party lines. I believe it so thoroughly that I don't complain even when my own party seems to exist — as it has done hitherto in Massachusetts — only for the sake of giving the other party its own way."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Hinckley, more imperturbably good-natured than ever. "But I'm afraid we don't understand each other quite so well as you think. Or, no, I'm sure we do understand each other a great deal better than we say. That second lesson is so hard to learn! Party to you means the grand old principles — Jefferson, Jackson, and all that sort of thing. Party to me means a lot of men who have helped you along and want to get something for it. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly," was the sympathetic reply.

"Well, that's where I don't trust you."

"My gratitude?"

"We don't say anything about gratitude, you know. The talk is always 'principle' in those cases. A man's principles never prevent him from climbing up; but it's odd how sometimes they make him kick over the ladder he climbed on."

Porter was somewhat graver now, but still the smile had not gone so far but it might come back. "You don't recognize principles in politics, Mr. Hinckley?"

"Well, between you and me, and now we're on the second lesson, I don't know that I should shake my friends on principle; — on interest, I might."

"I'm afraid I can't quite follow you those lengths."

"No, and that's why my heart isn't in your campaign."

The two men sat quiet and looked at each other for a few seconds. "See here, Hinckley," began Porter at last. "This is the way it stands. I believe I've got hold of a big card. If I can play it successfully, I have a future before me and the Democrats of Massachusetts are bound to get a big slice of that future. Now you say you've been in politics for thirty years, so I assume you're not very much under fifty. I believe in your ability and I believe more in your principles than you seem to. Get me beaten, if you can, and what is there ahead

of you? Just the same old round of Republican victories and you rolling the same old stone up the same old hill, like Sisyphus of respectable memory. Go in with me, go in whole-hearted, and I don't think you'll regret it."

Hinckley's smile was no less kindly than hitherto, certainly, but was it any more so? "Sounds well," he answered. "Heaven knows I'm sick of that stone-rolling business. But, as I said before, I don't trust you. Take a concrete case." As he spoke, he sat up and put more sharpness into his tone. "There are two of my heelers, Billy Morgan and Jake Ballou. They're good fellows and they'll do — anything — for me. They're laying off now, because — well, I didn't think they were your kind. If I set 'em to work, they'll do more than any four men you've got. Now, if you're elected, what will those two get out of it?"

Porter's smile was back again, as serene as before, but there may have been a trifle of hardness in it. "Ballou I know little about; but I don't like the company he keeps. Morgan I do know. I've watched his work at the State House. I'll tell you what he ought to get, in my opinion, — ten years in the penitentiary. Don't you agree with me?"

Hinckley's smile became a laugh, as he rose to go. "Oh, if we all got what we ought, —" he said. "I don't know that our little talk has helped much. Good morning, Mr. Porter."

Porter was inclined to think that the little

talk had helped. It seemed to him that under Hinckley's scepticism there was a growing confidence — not enthusiasm, perhaps, that was hardly to be looked for from the chairman's habits and experience; but a feeling that Porter's future might have something in it, after all. The interview had been useful, too, in confirming Porter's sense of Hinckley's value. He was an old politician, doubtless, thrice hardened in all the tricks of the trade, cynical and in a certain sense perfectly unscrupulous. But it was Porter's theory that such men had become what they were by the vices of the very system he was combating. Open executive responsibility, free public legislative discussion, would give their intelligence and abilities a far wider chance for development and success; and he believed that, if he could once get his ideas into practical working, Hinckley and those like him would be the first to see the advantage and profit by it.

All this he explained briefly to Viola, in a conversation they had on Sunday afternoon, adding that he believed not much was required to bring Hinckley into hearty support.

Viola thought a moment. "What if I talked to him?" she said.

"You?"

"I."

Porter's face displayed an amount of disgust unusual for him. "I couldn't have you do that sort of thing," he said.

"What sort of thing?"

"Why, everybody knows that Hinckley's one ambition is to get into the top set socially. He's cumbered with a wife who used to be his cook and nobody will have much to do with him. Burke and Dillworthy are close enough to him politically; but Burke would never have him at his house and Dillworthy only when he can't help it. He would do anything — literally — to come here. But — the idea is very unpleasant to me."

"Nonsense," was the quiet answer. "There's nothing wrong about it. You say the man is just ready to join us anyway. You say he may be very useful. And I understand that you really begin to have a certain liking for him, haven't you?"

"Why, yes. I believe, now, that he's more capable of understanding my ideas than any of them, unless Smith, and much more tactful than Smith for carrying them out. But yet — that you — with your habits and traditions — should condescend — "

"It isn't condescension," Viola interrupted, "it's ascension, to be working in any honest way for the cause I'm working for. I'm not the slave of my habits and traditions — never have been. And between ourselves I imagine I had quite as lief have Mrs. Hinckley in my house as Mrs. Burke. Say no more about it, please, till it's done."

"Another tabooed subject?" he answered, smiling.

"Yes," she said, smiling back, with a little embarrassment and, he thought, a little tenderness. "Another, but there are plenty left." And she plunged into some technical point affecting the next "Democrat" letter.

Monday morning Hinckley received a note asking if he could find time to call on Miss Buckingham that evening and if not, when he could do so. The first reading of the note made it all clear to him; but none the less the invitation was agreeable. It was perfectly true that his dearest ambitions were social rather than political. He was a man of keen wit and ready discourse, naturally gay, sensitive, emotional, eminently alive to the charm of women's company and women's talk. Every hour of the day he cursed his marriage, which had cut him off from these things, and nearly every hour the unhappy partner of it, audibly. And he not only wanted society, he wanted the best. The Burkes and Dillworthys would not have satisfied him, if he could have had them. He wanted real refinement, real cultivation, real charm. He wanted Viola and her set — nothing else. Perhaps nothing had impressed him more with a sense of Porter's power than the fact that he had made his way into that set and established himself there.

Now the doors opened wide of their own ac-

cord. It was for no merit or personal charm of his own. He understood that well enough — or thought he did. It was a clear case of corruption, an attempt to sap his old Roman civic virtue by the soft grace of feminine cajolery. He could not tell at first how it would please him to take it. His sweetest satisfaction might be to stand rock-like, immovable, and let the cooing waves of seduction break over him with perfect ineffectiveness. Or he might —

A little after eight o'clock he found himself in Viola's reception-room, alone with her; and one glance at her royal figure in its dark brown satin, at her grave and lofty face, showed his quick sensibility that here was no cheap device of social cunning, no vulgar elaboration of feminine artifice, such as he himself had so often made use of against others. A strange excitement possessed him to think that a woman like this should have condescended from her sphere sufficiently to care whether a man of his stamp was working on one side or on the other.

Viola approached her subject at once. "Mr. Hinckley, I am very much interested in Mr. Porter's campaign. I have become an enthusiastic convert to his ideas and I want to see him in a position to carry them out. Now he tells me that you believe in frankness, when the occasion calls for it. Will you be frank with me?"

"I will try," was the quiet answer, and Viola liked the tone of it and felt that if the man was seeking social success, he had tact enough not

to be vulgar, or fawning, or presumptuous, in his quest.

"Thank you. Tell me first, then, whether you really believe in Mr. Porter and are doing all you can for him."

Hinckley laughed, a very courteous, sympathetic laugh. "You propose to put my frankness to the test, don't you? But it will stand it and I tell you at once that I haven't made up my mind about Porter. Three months ago I should have said he was just such a mushroom as I have seen dozens of in my career, shooting up in a night nearly to the tree-tops — and gone the next night. I don't feel quite so sure now."

Viola followed his deliberate speech with the most watchful attention. "Exactly," she said. "The more you see of him, the less sure you will be. There's nothing of the mushroom about him. Did you never notice that there's a certain stage in the building of a house when it seems to go up all at once? But that is only seeming. The part of the work that counts is the slow laying of the foundation before and the careful finish after. Mr. Porter's movement of reform is just now at that stage of conspicuous growth. But it has a long foundation of slow thought behind it and will have a full period of development in the final working out."

Hinckley observed at once that she was careful to speak of the ideas and not the man. Nevertheless he suspected that her heart was more full of the man than of the ideas. It

somewhat increased his envy of her hero, but it increased his respect far more. Nothing of this went into his speech, however. "You'll think me very old-fashioned," he said, "but long experience has made me suspicious of all this talk about reform. Either the reformer is looking to nothing but his own pocket — which I consider out of the question in Porter's case, or he wants everything his own way and is utterly impatient of party discipline. Now I myself believe in parties. But probably that is too technical a view for a lady."

Viola answered with decision, but without the least impatience. "Don't think of me as a lady, please. During the last six months I've given all my thoughts to the technicalities of politics and the more technical they are, the more they interest me. I think everybody who has considered the subject will agree with you about the importance of parties. Nothing can be done without them. At the same time a great man will always be larger than his party, will strain and stretch it till the seams crack open. Only if he is a really great man, he will take his party with him. It will groan and grumble, but it will follow. It will grow slowly to his ideas, but it will grow to them. Now I believe, and I think you believe, in your heart of hearts, Mr. Hinckley, that Mr. Porter is a really great man. He has the magnetism which draws men and draws votes. More than that, he has a project which he is convinced will do

more to make popular government in this country clean, strong, and effective, than anything that has ever yet been tried. If he succeeds, he will give his party a prestige that it hasn't had for nearly a century. And surely if the Democracy of Massachusetts — we won't say anything about the United States — ever needed such a man and such an idea, it does now. Isn't it better to take the chance of a few vagaries, a little waywardness — mind, I don't believe there is any such chance — but wouldn't it be better to take it, if there were, and win and do a great work for the party and the country both, than to go on playing an idle game in which the Republicans have all the dice loaded?"

She paused a moment. Then, as she could see he was listening to her with all his ears — and eyes, although he made no answer, she went on. "But, of course, the first thing for Mr. Porter to do is to get the party together, to unite all the different elements in earnest, loyal support of him and his ideas. It's only so that we can make a strong, united, irresistible fight against the Republicans. Now, Mr. Hinckley, why don't you come to us unreservedly? Take sides with Mr. Porter for good or evil. Make his idea your idea, his victory your victory. If we lose, you're no worse off than now. If we win — and we shall win — you win with us and open for yourself a future of real usefulness, real activity, real success. Apart from Mr. Porter, where is your future?"

Through the noble restraint, the quiet dignity which she always kept about her like a queenly garment, there shone and throbbed such a fiery exultation, such a rapturous prophecy of approaching triumph as would have moved stolider nerves than she had now to deal with, and it was a moment before Hinckley could command himself to answer in as calm a tone as he wished.

"You have only told me — in larger fashion — what I have for some time been telling myself," he said at length. "But I am old, Miss Buckingham, and crusted all over, like a barnacled rock, with the sharp tricks of my trade. At fifty a man like me has one fear that is more than almost any other fear, the fear of being fooled. I've seen so many pretty ships go down, I've opened so many whited sepulchres and found them full of rottenness, I've probed so many human hearts and turned up nothing but lies, tricks, greed, selfishness, cruelty — how can you expect me to believe in anybody or anything? I am amazed that you have the power to make me sit here and talk as if it were possible."

"And why is it?" she interrupted earnestly. "Because I speak to you as if there were something in your heart and mine besides lies and rottenness. You've probed the wrong hearts, opened the showy sepulchres, watched only the ships that were gay, not those that were stout and seaworthy. It's the broad experience that

you have, call it, if you like, cynical, that will make you of use to us; for nobody can govern the world without fit arms to battle with its tricks and lies. But I say to you fairly, Mr. Hinckley, that I should not have asked you to come here if I had believed you to be a mere time-serving, tricky, unscrupulous politician and nothing more. Mr. Porter told me in so many words that he thought you more capable of understanding his ideas and more tactful for carrying them out than any man he knew. He believes that men of your stamp become machine politicians simply because our system does not allow them to become anything else. His system would encourage them, would compel them to be something else. He wants you to help him try it. Will you?"

"Did Porter say that of me?" asked Hinckley, in a low, toneless voice. "If you say so, I believe he did. I don't think you are making a fool of me — nor he."

There was a long pause. Hinckley looked down at the carpet, absorbed in thought. Viola looked at him. "Miss Buckingham," he said finally, "it's a good deal of a decision to make, but I have made it now, once for all. I shall work for Porter after this — honestly. I won't pretend there's a great deal of unselfishness about it, you know. You're quite right in saying that I don't see much before me in any other direction. I've been coming gradually to believe that Porter is a big man, and now I've

seen the enthusiasm he's been able to inspire in a woman like you, I believe it more than ever. I can't change my nature, but I mean what I say. I shall work for Porter after this — honestly — to the best of my ability."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Flitters had persuaded Viola to give a masquerade party on the last Friday evening but one before the election. "We must divert our minds from politics," he said. "And the only way to divert a woman's mind is to give her a costume to think about."

So the maskers gathered as thick as a flock of autumn blackbirds in a field of corn, as thick and as noisy, but by no means so uniform in colouring. Now and then there was black: Viola herself, who, as hostess, wore no mask, was dressed in black velvet, full Elizabethan costume, with a ruff and stomacher that would not have displeased the Virgin Queen. But all about her were colours infinite, green, gold, and azure, scarlet, rose, and sombre purple, the long wave of white plumes, the flash of jewels, a subtle, strange, bewildering maze of sudden lights and gleaming shadows.

And every one waltzed — in one inextricable whirl of discordant shapes and ill-assorted hues, couple after couple uniting contrasts beyond the wildest dreams of fevered fancy, a haughty Spanish cavalier with a trained nurse, a nautch-girl with a cowboy, a grinning satyr with a

Puritan maiden, an oozy sea god with a humble daughter of the Salvation Army, all whirled and whirled, like a top whipped again and again by the long, writhing lash of the voluptuous music.

Viola herself swung slowly round for a little while with a clown whose motion was as light and as largely rhythmical as her own. But she was more intent on hospitable duties than on dancing.

"George," she said, "I can't quite make them all out. Can you?"

"Nearly all. Enough."

"The astrologer?"

"Hinckley."

"Good. He came then. And Mrs. Hinckley?"

"Not here, I should say."

"Ah, I'm sorry. Yet perhaps this isn't quite the occasion."

"Not quite."

Another planetary revolution and Viola asked again: "The witch?"

"Constance."

"I was afraid so, though I don't know who invited her. She won't make a scene, will she?"

"About me? I ask you, could any one make a scene about me?"

"You are just the kind to make a scene about — and she the kind to make one."

"What can I do?"

"Nothing."

"Just so. And she will do the same. What a pity Porter couldn't come!"

"I hope he will for a little while later. His Cambridge speech ought to be over by ten. George, those street musicians, I suppose —?"

"Ruth and Eugene. I fancy that will come to something to-night."

"I don't like it, George."

"Why not?"

"I don't think it's suitable."

"Oh, Lord, is marriage ever suitable — unless yours and Porter's might be. I stirred Eugene up to it myself. He was talking to me this afternoon, said he had been wild to speak to her ever since they got back to town. I said, 'Why don't you?' He said, 'I'm not fit to kiss her shoes.' I said, 'It isn't necessary. You're a genius — a wandering voice.' He said, 'But the rest of me?' I said, 'That's very true; but with her the rest of you doesn't count. She lives in her imagination and always will. Apart from your music you're a commonplace creature; but so are all musicians, and so is she. In the music world you're getting to be a big thing — since "Mosquitos": engagements to play in concerts everywhere, stories in the newspapers, jealousy from all the other "artists," fools tumbling over each other to take lessons of you. You're it — going to be very much itter — she'll fall into your arms.'"

So she was doing, as much, at least, as she could, in that company. Eugene had come de-

termined to speak and Ruth determined, so far as was consistent with her unquestioned maidenliness, to give him the opportunity, which she knew perfectly well he had long been seeking. He certainly had not intended to mix love and waltzes, but the words were so ready, her ear, her round, pink, delicious ear, so close to his lips, that love flowed into it, as from a vase overfull. "I love you, Ruth, I love you, I love you, I love you." His arm pressed her perhaps more closely than beseems decorous dancing; but her hand returned the pressure of his, and they danced on, on, under the quivering spell of the rich waltz music, as if there were nothing but themselves, and their motion, and their love in the whole wide world.

Wingate, appropriately arrayed in the thousand-tongued surcoat of Rumour, discontentedly divined their measureless content and murmured his complaints to Viola, who had sent Flitters away from her on some errand of mercy.

"Do you think she will marry him?" Wingate asked.

"I think so, fear so," Viola answered, sympathetic, yet anxious not to encourage false hopes.

"Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly, yet with vast suggestion of the inconsequent possibilities of amorous folly. Then she changed the subject. "Has anything been heard from Governor Powers?"

Governor Powers was an ancient Republican

who was known to be much dissatisfied with his party's course both in national and state affairs. The Porterites nourished not unfounded hopes that he would come out on their side. If he did so, his influence would be most important.

Wingate was not interested in Governor Powers just then; but he had to answer. "Powers? Oh, yes. Nothing definite as yet. We sent a reporter to him this afternoon, and I told them to call me up, if they heard anything."

"It would be a great help, if he would come out squarely and strongly, wouldn't it?"

"Five thousand votes, I should say, at least."

Meanwhile the clown had discovered Flora disguised as Flora, with charming intentional infelicity. She of course also knew him; but each was careful to pretend absolute ignorance of the other's identity. It was gayer so.

"O goddess of freshness and verdure," said the clown, "up-stairs there are palms, rare orchids, ferns, soft moss, blossoms without end, fountains murmuring, quaint, strange nooks of woodland witchery. You belong up there, not in this hurly-burly of light and dust and odious mortality. Will you come?"

She nodded and followed him up the wide stairs into the great parlour, which, as he said, had been filled with flowers and dim shapes of greenness. At the moment the room was unoccupied and they seated themselves in a quiet

nook, on a rustic bench, with a little fountain plashing close beside them.

"I wish I knew who you were," said the clown, gazing abstractedly at his companion's mask.

"So do I," agreed the goddess with fervour. "Who does, in this bewildering world? What is it to be I or you?"

But the clown had no taste for metaphysics. "You might be Flora Chantrey, I should think; but she is too intelligent to disguise herself so obviously."

"Of course she is. Just as you might be Flitters; only it would be no disguise for him to be a clown."

The fountain murmured. The music downstairs flared and crashed. The witch Constance, unheard in the crash of it, had slipped behind a palm and was listening with all her soul.

"I have sometimes thought that Flora and Flitters might make a match," the clown suggested, taking a rosebud from the goddess's basket and picking it to pieces.

"A love match? Have you?"

"What other kind of match?"

"Can either of them love? Can one love and laugh too?"

"The best kind of love, I think. The other kind flames and burns — out. But that which has the golden threads of laughter woven all through it gets the permanence of laughter, its immortal sunshine."

"Flitters would hardly speak so seriously of laughter," suggested the flowery deity.

"Flitters can be more serious than the serious — when it befits," was the gentle reply.

Again there was no sound but the plash of the water and the wild waltz music.

"You are a goddess," began the clown once more, "and know women's thoughts. Would Flora marry Flitters, in spite of his fantastic foolery? May I tell him so?"

"Are you commissioned to speak for him?"

"Yes."

"If she married him — it would be — because of his foolery. Tell him — tell him — Oh, we'll say — if Mr. Porter is elected — perhaps she'll consider it. Chance should rule these matters."

But the witch burst out upon them now, red, fiery, furious. "I've heard it all," she cried. "What fools you make of each other. And what a fool you let him make of you, Flora Chantrey. Do you suppose he ever cared for any one or wanted anything but a subject for his foolish jokes? Jokes! Jokes! Always jokes! Is life a joke? Is love a joke? I haven't found it so. And you won't either always."

She stood before them, raising her arms in admirably, though unintentionally witchlike gesticulation, hissing her words through her mask, like the hiss of serpents. The two doubted whether to laugh or weep, longed for some device to quiet her, but knew not how.

Just then Viola appeared, having come in

search of Flitters, and heard Constance's last sentence or two. "Constance," she began imploringly, "Constance."

But the witch was worked into all the fury of a dull person completely thrown off her balance, who has brooded on herself and her wrongs till she can think of nothing else. She turned on Viola. "You're as bad as they are," she cried, "worse. You encourage them in all their folly, their cruel jokes, cruel, cruel. It is you who brought me here, who put me in his way, helped him play all his cruel tricks on me, cruel, cruel. But I'll be even with you, I know your secret. I know well enough that he writes those 'Democrat' letters. Why haven't they been smart enough to see it? Who else could write them? But they shall know it now. I'll tell them. And I guess people won't read them so much, when they find they're written by somebody who cares no more for Porter than he does for me or for Flora Chantrey or for anything but his jokes. Oh, yes, I'm going now," she said to Viola, who was vainly trying to soothe her. "I'm going now. I've said all I've got to say. I never want to see any of you again."

She turned and hurried off, Viola following in a vain attempt at pacification. Flora and Flitters eyed each other through their masks, stonily, in dumb amazement.

"I told you," said Flora.

"Oh, yes, you told me. I don't know that that helps it much. Was I to blame, Flora?"

"Certainly not. What else could you have done, being what you are? But those 'Democrat' letters — will she tell? Did you write them?"

"Write them? No. How absurd! Why should I care what she does?"

She had never seen him so moved and he had never known in her before anything of the gentleness with which she reassured and comforted him. It was terribly unfortunate, but of course he was not to blame. It was all Constance's unreasonable folly. And thus in their love some strands of soberer feeling came to mingle with the tissue of laughter which had hitherto perhaps been rather glittering than substantial.

All that Viola could accomplish with Constance was to get her safely out of the house with as little demonstration as possible. When this was done, the hostess returned to have some explanation with her cousin and to say a judicious word or two to such friends as would be most useful in allaying vulgar curiosity. She had not had time to carry out this intention fully, however, when she was told that a visitor was inquiring for her in the hall.

What visitor? Going out as soon as she could, whom should she find but Clara Porter, dress suit case in hand, waiting quietly amid the kaleidoscopic passage of masked figures in all

the colours of the rainbow, who must have seemed to her like the weird phantasmagoria of a fevered dream.

The whole evening was beginning to seem such to Viola. She had long been planning a visit from Miss Porter, but had thought it was postponed until a week later. Nevertheless her manner was the perfection of cordiality. "Dear Miss Porter, isn't this delightful! You won't mind our frivolities, will you?"

"I'm afraid I misunderstood and you weren't expecting me," answered the quiet lady in black. "I had not expected to come, until this afternoon. Then I reread your letter and thought you must have meant to-day. So I took the evening train and there was an accident which delayed us for nearly two hours. It was all very stupid."

Viola was entirely herself now. "Why should you explain or apologize? The only thing of importance is that you are here — and I am so glad. Come right up-stairs first and make yourself at home."

"But I can't take you away from your guests."

"Nonsense. My guests can get along very well without me for a few moments. George, be host for me."

She accompanied her visitor to her room and chatted with her, while she removed her wraps. "You'll come down-stairs now — for a time, at any rate, won't you?" Viola asked.

Miss Porter would have greatly preferred to stay by herself and said so, alleging her utterly unsuitable garb; but she could not resist Viola's gentle solicitation. "Of course I can explain just how you came. It will amuse you, I am sure," she urged. "And then your brother will be in by and by. I should like you to see how much they all think of him."

So the two went down again to the music-room. When they arrived, Flitters was just making a speech. The reaction from the shock of Constance's outbreak seemed to have made him more gay, more eager, more petulant, than ever. At the first pause in the dancing, after Viola's departure, he mounted a chair, proclaimed the absence of the hostess, and announced his intention of taking her place and addressing the company on the subject which at the moment was uppermost in the minds of all. "I planned this party," he said, "to give us diversion from politics. But evidently it was useless. You talk of nothing else. I see a red Indian and a ballet girl get together in a corner and I know they are discussing, not love, but Porter's chances. An astrologer confers with a Greek god, not about the mysterious motions of the stars, but about the more mysterious mental processes of ex-Governor Powers. So, on the whole, I think it best to speak out. If you must have politics, I'll give you enough of them."

Then he proceeded to adduce a dozen ironical reasons why the present company should vote

for Porter and rejoice in his election. In the full tide of his oratory, he saw the quiet black figure of Miss Porter enter the room at Viola's side; but this only stirred him to redoubled eloquence.

"Yes, the new governor is supremely intelligent, we all know that, and that makes me confident that he will succeed, in spite of his present undeniable honesty. Only the dull are honest in politics. The keen-witted see soon enough where their advantage lies. They see that it is impossible to get on in this free and noble country without fraud and corruption. They see that the mob is ruled by bribery in the gross and the rich by bribery in detail, and both by abject flattery; and they bribe and flatter. So will Porter — in time, and succeed, and we shall profit.

"Another excellence: as we all know, the governor totally lacks the sense of humour. I couldn't honestly vote for him if he had it. I should regard his future as hopeless. No American politician can really succeed with a sense of humour. The lying, the fawning, the stealing, why, even the mere hand-shaking, cannot possibly be done with the proper gravity, if a man sees the comedy of it all.

"And the best is that Governor Porter will provide so much comedy for those who appreciate it. He is a reformer. Think of the mass of absurdity that huddles in the word. When the great comic dramatist of heaven is minded

to crowd this earthly stage most fully with Aristophanic pleasantry, he takes some hypersolemn and serious puppet and fills him with the swelling raptures of reform. And the Philistine stands open-eyed and open-mouthed in horror, and good conservative philanthropists rail, and political sneak thieves ply their trade in redoubled security, and the wise smile sadly. Reform! Reform! More lives have been sacrificed, more good, sober, ordinary men and women shut up in madhouses, more sanctuaries profaned and more profanity sanctified in the name of Reform, than of all other fantastic, imperious, nautical, and juggernautical deities put together. Ladies and gentlemen, I call upon every mother's son and daughter of you to vote, as I shall, for Porter and Reform. Band, play us 'America' and we'll all sing."

When the singing was over, Viola, having given Miss Porter in charge to Wingate, found her cousin. "George, will you ask them all to go up to the supper-room and to unmask as soon as they get there? And, George, I hope you'll apologize to Miss Porter for your tirade. And, George, was it, anyway, very discreet of you, after the events of the evening?"

"Discreet? No. Do you expect me to be discreet? I'm depressed — very."

"It hath not appeared."

"Of course not. I am determined it sha'n't. But discreet! The more depressed I am, the less discreet. By the way," in a hurried whis-

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per, "who does write those 'Democrat' letters, Viola?"

"Hush! I do."

"I thought so. But I won't mention it."

"I knew you wouldn't."

In the supper-room Flitters devoted himself, as directed, to apologizing to Miss Porter. "I hope you didn't mind my nonsense," he said. "I worship your brother."

The white-haired lady smiled her simple, saintly smile. "Is everything you say to be interpreted by contraries?"

"Not what I say in private. My public utterances have exactly the same value as those of everybody else — except your brother."

"Now I think of it, didn't my brother tell me that you rendered him a great service just before the convention?"

"Did he tell you so? That was unlike a public character, wasn't it? To remember — and mention — that any one had done him a great service?"

"I'm afraid you're inclined to be cynical, Mr. Buckingham."

"No, no, not a bit of it. Only I'm one of those who render great services and never receive them. That disposes one to be cynical, don't you think?"

"I don't know," was the quiet answer. "I can't speak from experience."

"Of course not. Of course not. Tell me your impression of all this, Miss Porter."

"My impression? Your inquiry is a little abrupt. I think it is all — very pretty — and very bewildering."

"Just so. You are a saint, aren't you?"

Miss Porter laughed at the renewed abruptness, but did not seem to dislike it. "What makes you think that?"

"What makes you think that I'm a sinner?"

"I imagine you want me to think so."

"And don't you want me to think you're a saint — really now — way down in the bottom of your heart? I can understand it, oh, yes, I understand it. I have so often thought I should like to be a saint myself. And I may yet. White, white, white sanctity has such a charm. But then, so has the red, red rose of sin, hasn't it? And it is so utterly impossible to blend the two. And, after all, perhaps one sucks the sweet of life best by continuing to be a sinner and all the time wishing to be a saint. Or do you think the other way round is more satisfactory? Aren't you simply ravished with the quality of these ethical speculations? I feel just in the mood for them to-night. I've had a great shock."

But Viola, who mistrusted her cousin's apologies, had brought up Miss Tucker, fatly habited as Queen Victoria, and Flitters slipped away to carry on his ethical communings by himself. For a few moments he did this, sunk in a sofa corner behind curtains in a deep window recess, his face buried in his hands, as if the sound of

Constance's fierce outbreak was still ringing through his brain, drowning all the pleasant whirr of gaiety about him. Then, springing up and making a hasty gesture as of brushing cobwebs from his forehead, he wandered over to Astrologer Hinckley, who happened to be standing alone and looking rather at a loss.

"Good evening, Mr. Hinckley. I'm charmed to see you here."

The two had met once or twice in the course of the summer's politics and Hinckley knew the other well by reputation. "The pleasure is reciprocal," answered the chairman cordially.

"You wouldn't think a clown like myself would have been just the one to disconcert all your well-laid schemes this summer, would you?"

Hinckley stared.

"I did it. I first smelled out Warren's treachery and told Porter. A pretty piece of work, wasn't it? And doesn't seem like a fool's."

"It seems more like a —" the astrologer began. Then he stopped.

"Just so. It seems more like a fool to tell of it, doesn't it? That's just the way I am. If I could do the things for myself and then not tell of them, I should be the governor and Porter the fool; for, between ourselves, my intelligence is worth a dozen of his. But what would you have? And then, to tell the truth, Hinckley, I'd rather be what I am, and throb and quiver every moment with the joy of life,

flit in and flit out of golden worlds like this and suck all the honeyed sweetness of them, than be a governor or even chairman of a state Democratic committee. Don't you find that years spent in buying votes — for other people, in lobbying dirty bills through dirtier legislatures, in pulling fools up and kicking other fools down, unfits one for enjoying one's self?"

"I do, God knows I do." At that moment, looking at the gay, careless flight of pretty women about him, not one of whom but thought a politician beneath contempt, the chairman felt his answer to be the sincerest of his life. And probably there was not a person there who could better enter into and appreciate Flitters's view of things than he.

"I divined it," cried the delighted clown. "You are like Calchas in *La Belle Hélène: Si j'avais suivi ma vocation, j'aurais été homme de plaisir.* We are born companions, Hinckley. Let me teach you to enjoy yourself."

But the astrologer sighed. "Too late," he murmured, "too late."

In the window recess corresponding to the one where Flitters had taken refuge Wingate had seated Ruth and thither he brought supper for her and for himself. They had danced the preceding waltz together, and Ruth, exuberant with her new-found joy, had treated her partner with a gentleness that deceived him. "She cannot care for that oaf, McCarthy," he thought. "At least, I must find out whether she cares

or not." So, as they ate together, he was very silent, wondering in what way best to ask his question.

But Ruth felt it absolutely necessary that the question — she read it in his eyes, in the very gesture with which he handed her a plate of salad — should not be asked. "Mr. Wingate," she said, "you will keep my secret, won't you? I feel that I must tell it you. I am engaged — to — Eugene. I am so happy."

Oh, certainly, he would keep her secret, and he was very glad she was happy and hoped she would be so always, and, in saying it, he tried to keep out the suggestion that he hoped she would not. He did not succeed; but she pitied and forgave. Only it is doubtful whether either of them got much pleasure from the remainder of that supper.

When the company returned to the lower floors, they found Porter and Burke just arrived.

"He ought to go home to bed," said Burke to the hostess, "speaking every night and attending to correspondence half the day. He is made of iron."

But Porter laughed. "There is no anxiety now," he said. "Only fun. Wait till I am governor." And indeed it was impossible not to wonder at his serenity and evident health. He ate and slept as he had always done and seemed as fresh at midnight as in the morning.

When the dancers fell to work again, Porter

and Hinckley began chatting together and Hinckley called over Wingate, who at present had but one desire, to find some decent excuse for getting away.

"Nothing more definite as yet from Powers?" Porter asked.

"Nothing as yet."

"I heard on very good authority this afternoon," went on the candidate, "that he had finally made up his mind and was coming out against us."

"I can't believe it," Wingate objected.

"I'm afraid I do."

"Well, I sent one of our best men for an interview this afternoon. He was to call me up here. I don't know why he hasn't."

The talk was going on with increasing eagerness; but Flitters interrupted. "This is intolerable," he said. "Every politician who comes here dances, unless he prefers to sing a song. Hinckley, will you sing a song? No? Then come and ask your hostess to dance. Porter, there's Flora waiting for you. Wingate, Wingate — "

The others obeyed, but Wingate timidly announced his intention of departing, and Flitters, after looking at him for a second, guessed why. "All right, old man," he said. "And won't you telephone to the office to call me up, if there's anything from Powers?"

"I will."

Then Flitters returned to his flock and set

them all whirling more wildly than ever. Porter's announcement about Powers had somehow circulated and at first brought a slight depression with it. But Flitters's merriment banished this before long. He danced first with one girl, then with another. He initiated intricate square dances and wandering reels. When no one could stand any longer, he led wild choruses that refreshed drooping spirits and reanimated sinking limbs. Those who knew him best had never before seen him in quite such a mood of irresistible, infectious, faunlike gaiety.

Suddenly, however, at the end of one of the wildest reels, he checked them all. "Let's go home before we are exhausted," he said. "Pick the rose before it withers. Break the flask before it comes to the last drop. If only we could treat life in the same way. And for those of a more earthly disposition, who have been unable altogether, even in this atmosphere, to shake off the low preoccupation of ephemeral cares, I may perhaps mention that I have just received a telephone message from Wingate. He says that the *Intelligencer* will print to-morrow a long interview with ex-Governor Powers, who announces that although he remains a Republican on national issues, he believes heartily in Porter's ideas of state politics and in the man Porter himself and will turn in his vote on the sixth of November for Porter and Burke. Now then, three times three for ex-Governor Powers, and good night."

They cheered and went.

"I hope you aren't irrecoverably shocked and disgusted at such a frivolous world," said Viola to Miss Porter, as she accompanied her to her room.

"It isn't just the world I am used to," answered the quiet lady. "But it may do me all the more good. Surely your cousin is a very remarkable person."

CHAPTER XXXV

So the campaign went merrily on. Hinckley's genuine acceptance of Porter's leadership showed itself in a distinct quickening of activity on the Democratic side. Newspaper editorials, newspaper appeals, newspaper advertisements, advertisements of every kind, answered each other in hot volleys, full of sound and fury, occasionally signifying something. Speakers on both sides spoke everywhere: for the Democrats Porter himself untiringly, Burke, Smith, many others who had become interested now they found that something was really going on; for the Republicans Heath, Burgess (candidate for lieutenant-governor), the two senators, and congressmen innumerable.

A day or two after the masquerade Hinckley had a little talk with Porter on the subject of money.

"The Republicans are using their dollars freely," remarked the chairman.

"Buying votes you mean?"

"It's early to buy many votes right out. But they will buy them."

"You can't do that very widely in Massachusetts," Porter objected.

"Bless you, yes you can," answered the other, with the air of a man who knew.

"Hinckley," continued the leader seriously, "that is something I won't have. Spend all the money you like, and can get, legitimately — on advertising, printing, rallying, what you please. But I won't have a vote bought for me."

The chairman bowed his head with unwonted submission. "Well," he sighed, "I believe we can beat them without. They wouldn't try it, if they weren't absolutely desperate."

It was long since a purely state campaign had excited so much interest. Men lost their tempers at the clubs discussing whether Porter's ideas were mere moonshine, a painted hobby-horse trimmed conveniently for riding into office, good afterwards for nothing but the rubbish heap, or whether he would really attempt to carry them out in the face of indifferent supporters and defiant opponents. Old-fashioned Republicans abused him as a disturber of the peace, incapable of appreciating the good things that are, a radical, hot with his own insane rhetoric, a turbulent demagogue, dangerous as nitro-gylcerine, to be heroically voted down by all citizens who loved their country. Progressive Democrats laughed, said that "the good things that are" went too exclusively into Republican mouths and pockets, that Porter was not only honest and patriotic in intention, but a man with a grip who would take hold in the

right way at the right time and give the state the thorough cleaning up it needed after so many years of Republican corrupt domination. Citizens who loved their country would surely vote for him, urged the Democratic orators. Thus it will be seen that the citizen who loved his country above party, if such a creature existed, had a hard time of it.

The enthusiasm even spread beyond Massachusetts. The New York papers commented on Porter and the situation, some with owl-like gravity and others with ghoul-like merriment. One or two responsive echoes came from Philadelphia, Chicago, and the far west. A Montana contemporary seemed to have caught some glimmerings of Porter's idea, and asserted that the result of the struggle in Massachusetts might affect the destiny of children yet unborn, a statement which afforded infinite gaiety to several humorous Republican journals.

In nearly every discussion of the subject more or less reference was made to the "Democrat" letters and indeed it was clear to every one that these documents were affecting the course of the campaign more than any other one thing, unless it was the personality of Porter himself. Every week they seemed to grow in vigour, terseness, wit, point, direct and sinewy grasp of the problems before the people. One of the best ideas of the converted Hinckley was the publication of the letters collected in a most effective

pamphlet which was distributed all over the state.

Republican comments and answers to "Democrat" were of course forthcoming from everywhere, many of them witty, satirical, and ingenious; but none seemed to have any great vogue or take the public ear. The most effective were those which hinted at the insincerity of Porter's democracy and charged him with making a great parade of democratic ideas to the people, but all the time identifying himself more and more with an idle, luxurious class from which he drew all his intellectual and financial support. These charges were general, however, vague and impersonal; and "Democrat" had not found it necessary to take more than a passing notice of them. Even for two or three days after the masquerade and Constance's threat of revelation, nothing more definite appeared; and Viola began to hope that the threat would not be carried out and she should be saved a complication which had wide possibilities of unpleasantness.

She was mistaken. Wood had held the joker — till he wanted to use it. On the morning of Wednesday, November first, not one but half a dozen leading Republican papers all over the state came out with great headlines. AUTHOR OF DEMOCRAT LETTERS REVEALED AT LAST. COLOSSAL FAKE. This was the prelude to a lively story to the effect that the author of the

letters was now known to be George Buckingham, librettist of a popular comic opera, a clever man about town, rich, idle, member of a dozen clubs, absolutely without any political convictions or enthusiasms whatsoever, whose sole serious occupation hitherto had been the writing of witty advertisements for Hanks's suspenders and other such useful articles. It had come to this, then, said the Republican papers, that a political nostrum must be advertised like any other nostrum. The inventor of a panacea warranted to cure all the ills of government must resort to the man who boomed popular specifics for a disordered liver; and the same ingenious wit which could turn happy verses on a pill for indigestion could indite flaring philippics on a salve for a corrupt legislature.

The Solons of Republicanism amplified still further on their text. All this came obviously from the company the Democratic candidate had been lately keeping. Nobody doubted that by inheritance and temper he was a good, sober, serious young man, a little conceited, over-confident in his judgment, disposed to think that he could remodel an old world with a few touches of his deft fingers. Still, all this one could respect him for, even if one smiled and did not agree with him. But surely his warmest admirers could not approve of the change that had recently come over his habits and surroundings. To pry too deeply into the social relaxation of an ordinary personage would, of course,

be impertinent and indecorous. But the candidate for governor must expect every detail of his life to be subject to the closest scrutiny. Was it suitable, then, that the representative of the people *par excellence*, the man who stood above all things for democratic ideals and simplicity of life, who repudiated the excesses of wealth and luxury which his poor followers and supporters could not share, should consort only with the rich, with the idle, with those who had confessedly no other object than the gratification of their own whims and who had nothing whatsoever in common with the class which he assumed to represent? Consistency in all things was, perhaps, beyond the reach of politicians as well as of common men. But there was a certain degree of inconsistency which was hardly compatible with political self-respect. Nothing as yet had so definitely shown the extent to which Mr. Porter had allowed himself to come under unfortunate influences as the fact that his brilliant support in the "Democrat" letters was now proved to have emanated from such a source. And he could be well assured that a large part of the significance of the overwhelming defeat which certainly awaited him on the following Tuesday might be attributed to the very undesirable connections in which he had recently become entangled.

Porter laughed at this. So did all his friends. But it hurt. Such things always hurt.

"What will you answer? Or will you an-

swer?" he said to Viola when he saw her for a moment Thursday evening.

"Oh, I shall answer," she replied calmly. "And I think you will be satisfied."

He was.

Saturday morning came the "Democrat" letter as usual and hundreds of thousands of readers waited for it with overwhelming curiosity. "At the acutest crisis of a campaign," it began, "when nothing should be considered but political issues of the most vital importance to the community, our attention is cleverly distracted by petty insinuations of personal insult. Hitherto I have avoided the discussion of such things. It can be avoided no longer. Let us have it clear and brief so that it can be understood by every one."

The writer then took up the question of authorship. Mr. Buckingham was accused of it. And he, forsooth, was a witty man, a writer of advertisements. It was natural perhaps that the average Republican should be afraid of a witty man. But what was there dishonest or degrading about writing advertisements? With advertisements, as with sermons, the thing was to write them well. As to advertising in itself, of course Mr. Porter was advertising, and Mr. Heath was advertising, and every political personage and political party since the beginning of the world had always been advertising, offering their wares to the public with all possible ingenuity of persuasive commendation. In poli-

tics, as in other things, the old adage held fully. It pays to advertise, when you have a good thing. The Republicans would find it had paid Porter, when the day of reckoning came.

But could there be anything more absurd than this tempest about the authorship of the letters? As if they were the plays of Shakespeare. Did they hit straight and hard? Did the blows tell? Did every sentence knock over a Republican vote, every argument sound a trumpet call to those who were blinded by old traditions and mouldy conventions? The author's modesty could hardly hope that this was the case; but if it were, they would have served their purpose. What matter whether they were written by George Buckingham or Theodore Roosevelt?

Further, now that the question of Mr. Porter's social relations had been so impudently opened by the Republican papers, "Democrat" would say a few words on that more general subject, to dispose of it once for all. Mr. Porter had given no authority or commission to any one to speak for him; but it so happened that "Democrat" was in a situation to know some facts which would shed an interesting light on the matter. Nearly a year ago, when Porter first began to be thought of as a candidate, some of the Republican leaders were discussing the situation. How should they meet this new danger? What was the best way of putting this eager, young, uncompromising spirit out of the political field? Various suggestions were

brought forward. At length one of the more ingenious plotters proposed a woman. There was no quicker, no surer, no deadlier way of destroying a man's political future than by the influence of a woman. But what woman? In this case nothing common or mean would do, no mere adventuress, lobbyist, hired at so much a day to wheedle and cajole some unfortunate of her own quality. Even Republican politicians could appreciate that Porter was not of the stuff to be approached in such a fashion. What then? The proposer of the scheme was not balked by these obvious objections. Something different was required. Something different was what he had in mind. Porter was a Democrat, a radical, his political existence was dependent upon Democrats and radicals, men to whom luxury was — in theory — anathema, and elegance and refinement the subtlest devices of the devil of idleness. What was needed, then, was a woman of aristocratic breeding, unlimited wealth, wide culture, and luxurious habits, who should ensnare the young Democrat, fascinate him with the grace and witchery of her idle world, teach him insensibly her own infinite contempt for the reek of Democracy and the claptrap of radicalism, so that he should find himself at last in a thoroughly false position. Then, when he was saturated with this subtle virus, completely indentified with these new, unnatural, absolutely inconsistent surroundings, just at the right moment, in the perfect polit-

ical crisis, the Republican papers would discover the inconsistency and benevolently point it out to their deluded enemies, crying treachery, treachery, treachery, till the bewildered people really thought they had been betrayed.

It was a clever scheme, "Democrat" said, and it might very well have succeeded. The ingenious Republican politician knew just where to find the woman for his purpose and found her. She was rich, idle, luxurious, hated the mob and disbelieved in democratic ideals. And she agreed, partly from idle curiosity, partly from a vague idea of helping her own class against the rabble she detested, to undertake the Iscariot-like task that was proposed to her. What happened? Did Mr. Porter lose his fixity of purpose, or change the temper of his disposition? Not one jot. "Democrat" would fearlessly declare that the leader was more sincerely democratic, more uncompromising in his efforts, more fully convinced of the great future of popular government, than he had ever been in his life before. Instead of being himself influenced by the atmosphere of luxury and idleness with which he had come in contact, he had influenced others. Even the idlest, even the most luxurious, had felt the enthusiasm of his ideals and had come to take an absorbed interest in his success. It was his distinguishing quality that he could communicate his own zeal. And the persons who had been selected as the instruments of his downfall had found their acquaintance with him

the beginning of a new spiritual life, had discovered a new nobility in politics, a new significance in history. They had been bidden to make him disbelieve. He had made them believe. Among all his old friends and political associates he had to-day no more ardent and thoroughgoing supporters and sympathizers than those whom the cynical chiefs of the Republican party had chosen to be his ruin. Thus the overwhelming victory which was certain to be his on the following Tuesday would be, in some part at least, owing to the very efforts which had been made for his defeat. Could there be a more impressive instance of the way in which evil designs recoil upon the heads of the designers?

This personal portion of the letter was followed by a few other telling strokes of a more general character; but it is safe to say that these attracted comparatively little attention. On the other hand, the Republican attack on Porter's personal character and "Democrat's" vigorous and daring vindication were read and discussed by nearly every man, woman, and child in the whole state.

As for Porter, when the first minute came that he could snatch during the busy morning, he took a cab and ran up to Viola's. Something of his feeling he must pour out to her. Gratitude for the splendid political service was much; but passionate love, adoration almost, for the woman's personal sacrifice was more.

She received him alone, had perhaps — shall I say, probably? — expected him. He walked up to her, took both her hands, and looked deep, deep into the dark eyes, which seemed almost ready to fill with tears.

"How could you do it?" he said. "How could you do it? Offer yourself, your inmost, palpitating heart, to be pawed and trodden on by those hideous brutes? How could you do it?"

"I would do more than that for the cause I am serving," she answered, self-possessed, yet he was aware of the effort in her self-possession.

He still held her hands, still spoke in the same tone. "All for the cause? Nothing for me?"

But she drew her hands away and laid one finger on her lips, as resolute as ever. "Hush! The election! How can we think or talk of anything now but the election? We should be profaning the high sanctity of all our ideals, if we did."

CHAPTER XXXVI

"It seems the fellow keeps repeating his challenge to you to debate in Faneuil Hall, Dudley," said Wood to his nephew. "It's all nonsense, but I don't know but you'll have to meet him."

"Oh, by all means, meet him. Why not?"

"Afraid?"

"Wouldn't you be?"

"I don't see why you need. The one thing you can do is talk, could from your cradle. You can outtalk him, I think. Then, if he challenges, you can have the last word."

"Thank you. I'd rather have the first. I don't want to argue with Porter. The trick in these matters is to get your audience into the right mood to start with. Then let him hammer away at 'em as much as he likes. Afterwards I'll pull him up with a little ridicule."

"Have it your own way. It's your affair, not mine. Only I think it will have to be done."

So the great debate was arranged for Saturday, November fourth, the day on which Viola's defence of her hero appeared. Admission to the hall was to be only by ticket. Some of Porter's friends had feared that this plan would discontent his humbler followers and had taken

pains to see that tickets were distributed impartially to persons of all classes. As the time approached, however, the demand became so great that several dollars were readily paid to any holder who was willing to sell and the chances were that the audience would be as select as that of a symphony concert. Hinckley was much disturbed until he hit upon the happy idea of announcing that on Monday evening in the same place Porter would give an account of the debate and sound a final note of exhortation to every Democrat who could make his way in.

"That damned Hinckley," said Wood to Heath, as he read the signature to this notice. "Porter's hypnotized him for good."

"It's Viola, they say," returned the other. "All part of that beautiful scheme of yours."

To this Wood made no answer. "Well, it'll have to be Tremont Temple for us, that's all. And you've got to get the best of him Saturday."

Hinckley, too, was thinking about Saturday as well as Monday. "I hope too many of those tickets aren't going into Republican hands," he said to Porter. "We don't want them to have all the noise."

"No fear," was the smiling answer. "You know a handful of Rooney's friends will make more racket than all the Republicans in the state. It isn't that I count on though. George Buckingham has taken the thing in charge and

will have a solid phalanx of his own that will do — whatever may be necessary. Besides, from what I hear, I think as many Republican tickets have been sold as Democratic."

Even Faneuil Hall has rarely seen a more impressive audience than gathered there on that Saturday evening. The platform was crowded with well-known dignitaries, an ex-President of the United States, four United States senators, congressmen, judges, college presidents, men prominent in every business and profession. The body of the hall held, perhaps, more women than had ever been seen at a political gathering; for the personal relations of the two candidates and the gossip engendered by the "Democrat" correspondence had aroused a passionate interest in many to whom abstract politics meant no more than abstract astronomy.

Ex-Senator Woodward presided, a Republican of the war time, but a man whose well-known dignity and breadth of character assured absolute impartiality.

At eight precisely the two candidates came upon the platform from opposite doors. When they met in the middle and shook hands a roar of applause went up that might have fitly welcomed a second declaration of independence. The audience saw not only two aspirants to the highest office in the commonwealth, but two men who had been struggling for years in the keenest personal rivalry and now came together at the crisis of their lives to pit all their gifts

against each other in an open contest before the most brilliant array of judges that the country could afford. For a moment the crowd gave way to a sort of delirium and Senator Woodward made no attempt to call them to order.

When the candidates were quietly seated, a lull came, however, and then the chairman explained the conditions of the debate. Mr. Heath was to speak first, for a half-hour. Mr. Porter was to follow, also for a half-hour. Mr. Heath was to have fifteen minutes to reply and Mr. Porter the same length of time to close. The audience was asked to remember that the important feature of the evening was the speaking, and that while a proper amount of enthusiasm — here the chairman smiled — was quite allowable, any undue protraction of disturbance would render it necessary to stop the debate at once. Both speakers had left such closure to the chairman's discretion and he wished the assembly to take warning beforehand.

The assembly laughed, cheered the chairman, shouted in frenzy as Heath rose to begin his speech, then settled down to rapt attention.

And Heath spoke wonderfully well. There was no doubt about that. No one had ever heard him speak so well before. His was just the temper to respond to the stimulus of a great occasion. He moved about the platform enough to seem perfectly at ease. All his gestures and attitudes were graceful. His manner never lost the indefinable aristocratic something, which was

not haughty, was not patronizing, yet seemed to give him an inborn right to be a leader and to make men move at his behest.

From the beginning he took bold and strong ground on the claims of the Republican party. It was not perfect. What human institution was or could be? But what a past it had behind it! And he rehearsed the old theme of glory with a cleverness of rhetoric that seemed almost new. The past was nothing, however. No party could take its stand for ever upon that. The real Republican reliance was on present and future. Briefly but effectively he outlined the chief Republican principles. Then he showed that it was not only the principles that counted. It was the steadfastness which supported them. The Republican was the party of stability. Open to wise change, always looking for a chance to improve the condition of things, it yet deprecated sudden and violent shifts which had no meaning and no permanent value. Looking back at its history, who could fail to recognize a uniform course of moderate, intelligent, uninterrupted progress? And what was offered in its stead? No one could deny that the Democracy contained many brilliant minds who would be an honour to any party. The present occasion alone furnished abundant evidence of that. But they were too apt to give their energies to mere attack and destruction. As, for instance, his honourable friend there who charged the legislature of Massachusetts with all

the evil and corruption under the sun. And what support had these brilliant exceptions, what background, what guarantee of permanence? As many leaders, so many parties. Now one new specific, then another. And in the twinkling of an eye this last had vanished and still another had arisen in its place. Was it for a moment to be supposed that the sober good sense of the majority of citizens would entrust the government to a faction so mobile, so uncertain, so incapable of persistence in any course, good, bad or indifferent? For his part, he did not believe it. The future of Massachusetts, like the future of the nation, would be entrusted to the Republicans, and in so far as he was a humble representative of that party, he could promise that the people should never regret their confidence.

The speaker was immensely applauded during his speech, with only an occasional Democratic murmur; and when he had finished, the outburst was as enthusiastic as could be desired.

Yet Viola detected, or thought she detected, something of a heartier ring in the shout which greeted Porter, as he rose quietly and took his place in the centre of the platform. Some might prefer his manner and some Heath's; but there could be no question as to the difference between the two. Porter moved little, used few gestures. He had none of Heath's nonchalant ease, none of his high-bred grace and elegance. But before he had spoken two minutes, one of

the senators — Republican at that — whispered to the Republican college president beside him, "This is a man." And the college president answered, "He is, if I know one."

Porter lost no time in rhetoric, but went right at the facts. He was glad his opponent had insisted on fundamental party principles. He himself should do the same. The first, the cardinal principle of the Democratic party had always been the importance of the state. He went on to show in some detail how in the early days, when the union was growing, it had been unnecessary to insist on this principle. Then the union had grown and grown, until by means of the war and the splendid triumphs and services of the Republican party, it had come altogether to overshadow the original elements of which it was composed. So that now the state governments were merely tolerated, neglected, and every ambitious politician, every voter even, looked to Washington as the true sphere of all political activity. The protest against this condition of things was the natural duty of the Democratic party and it was in expression of that protest that he had allowed himself to be put forward as the Democratic candidate for governor.

He then made it clear by numerous instances that the state government was of infinitely more importance to the average citizen than the national. If this was so, surely it was above all things essential that the state government should

be clean, strong, effective. Was it so? Was it not notorious that everywhere the state governments were feeble, incapable, and corrupt? Yes, his adversary had charged him with saying that the state legislatures, not of Massachusetts only, were corrupt. Would his adversary, or any one else in the distinguished assemblage — here he looked at the dignitaries on the platform — deny the corruption? But in urging this he meant to bring no charge against the individual legislators. Man for man they were as honest as other men. He had known scores of them personally and esteemed them and believed in them. The men were not at fault. It was the system. Three hundred men were brought together, each to fight for his separate district. What could they do but trade and bargain and sell their votes and their voices one to another? In all this unorganized mob, who represented the state? The governor? Where was the governor? Did he ever appear in the legislature? Did he have any one to represent him in the legislature? But, it might be said, he has a veto. The sole representative of the state as a whole, and only a veto! What if the captain of a ship had only a veto on the decisions of the crew? What if the general of an army had only a veto on the plans of a council of war? Would that be a practical way to govern? "Fellow citizens," the speaker concluded, "there is but one way to purify our state governments. Give the governor power,

at the same time holding him to the strictest responsibility. On that plank I stand or fall. It is a Democratic plank simply because the Democrats have had the wisdom to make it so. But no Republican who loves his country or looks forward to the future with a prophetic eye will or ought to vote against it."

There had been far less applause during this speech than during Heath's. No telling points had been made, no rhetorical pauses, there had been no clever waving of the stars and stripes back and forth before the golden calf of party loyalty. But the speaker himself felt, his adversary felt, every one present felt, that every one present was listening. Something in the quiet, earnest, penetrating voice, something in the spirit behind the voice, held every other spirit by a charm too deep for mere outcry and riotous demonstration. When Porter had concluded, however, the prolonged tumult of enthusiasm had a note which other ears than Viola's felt to be different from anything that had preceded it.

Yet Heath was not daunted. His courage, whether on the polo ground or on the battlefield of politics, was of the kind that rises with defeat. Calm, cool, serene, he stepped forward and began his answer with the same well-bred ease that had marked his first attack, and in making use of a courteous, deferential irony, he probably resorted to the most effective weapon that could have been found for his pur-

pose. He could afford to be generous, he said, in paying tribute to the noble, the truly lofty oration to which they had been listening; since he need hardly tell his auditors or his gifted opponent that it had little bearing on practical politics. Indeed, such abstract theorizing was so far remote from all actual conditions that it seemed almost superfluous for him to attempt to discuss any of the every-day points that appeared to be involved. Yet something he did feel bound to say as to the iniquity of the state legislature. His friend's ideal scheme appeared to require that the legislature should be corrupt. As this was the case, it seemed unkind to show that the legislature was not corrupt. But facts were facts. He then proceeded to narrate some telling incidents which pleased the audience for the moment, and subtly altered its frame of mind, as the speaker intended. After all, however, he went on, of what use was this sober, practical point of view? His opponent was an idealist. He had been telling them, not what could be done, but what should be done, might be done, some day, somewhere, in a better world than this. How often had such candidates appeared before, with immense projects for reforming all evils under the sun. Where were they? What had become of them? If they had had the good fortune to be elected, they had turned out to be governors like other governors, accepting the conditions of their office, doing what good they could — some of them — none

of them ever thinking again of the wonderful programme they had proclaimed for themselves beforehand. For his part, he could not pretend to build castles in the air for the hard future to knock over. All that he could promise was to do his duty as his predecessors had done, and to be a faithful servant to the constitution of Massachusetts according to the good old traditions of the Republican party. It was not much in sound, perhaps, but it was at least a promise that could be and would be carried out.

Republican supporters from platform and floor received these honourable sentiments with due approval, yet even the warmest partisans seemed to applaud with a trifle of impatience, as if they were less interested in their candidate's confession of faith than in the possibilities of Porter's reply.

That reply came instantly, straight and clear. His adversary's tactics, Porter said, were to turn him and his ideals into a jest. But he would not be turned into a jest. Talk of facts! He himself was a fact and a stern fact, as his adversary would find out when the time came. It was the curse of American life, in politics, perhaps in other matters, to take everything as a joke. Dishonesty was a joke, lying was a joke, bribery was a joke, a good joke, a clever trick by which the brightest man won his way and sailed laughing into the highest and sacredest offices of the state. His friend had given various romantic instances of legislative integrity.

Many others might doubtless be found to match them. But alas, how easy would it be to parallel every one of these with a deed of shame. The speaker then referred briefly to some of the most notorious scandals of recent years and also to a few lesser matters which had come within his own personal observation.

In view of such things as these, could any one, he asked, seriously deny that the whole of our political life, and with our politics, of our business world, was tainted by financial corruption?

"This, fellow citizens, is where we land, when we take our government, our history, our national honour, as a joke. There is a fit time to laugh and a time when laughter is hideously out of place. Life is a serious thing. The lives and happiness of three, of eighty millions of people are a serious thing. The future of free government is a serious thing, not to be toyed with, or made light of, or jested away. I stand here before you to-night with the professed and serious purpose of making Massachusetts an example to every state in the Union, of making her the leading free commonwealth in the world; and I solemnly pledge myself, in defiance of all jesters and jesting, to give my best endeavours, to give my life itself, if necessary, to the accomplishment of that end."

Mere printed words cannot convey the earnestness, the dignity, the almost sacred solemnity, which went to the utterance of this vow. Not a man or woman in the audience but felt

it. Not a man or woman stirred for several seconds after the speaker ceased; but there was a hush as if he had been breathing a prayer. Then a mighty shout filled the wide hall and echoed round the benignant faces of the ancient fathers. "Porter! Porter! Hurrah for Porter!" The Republicans dutifully set up an opposing cheer for their candidate; but the noise was less spontaneous and less effective, and even outside the hall, far down into the crowded street, the waiting multitude took up the cry, "Hurrah for Porter! Porter! Porter!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

Sunday Porter allowed himself a peaceful afternoon and evening in Foxbridge alone with his sister. They talked much of politics, of course, much of the debate, much of the "Democrat" letter and of the Republican comments on it in the morning papers. For Miss Porter had been reading the Sunday papers, perhaps for the first time in her life.

"They were rather feeble, I thought," said Clara.

"But then you are prejudiced," was her brother's smiling answer.

"I don't deny it. But they took so little notice of the exposure of Heath's conduct. All they did was to reinsist on Mr. Buckingham's authorship of the letters. And why shouldn't he write the letters? But the other charge was a different matter. Do you suppose, Mat, they really — use the influence of — all sorts of women — in politics?"

"I suppose they do, dear sister. I fancy they would be glad to use the influence of even such women as you. I am sure I should."

"You know that isn't what I mean."

"I know what you mean. They certainly

didn't use any such influence in my case, whatever they might have liked to do."

"Those letters have been a wonderful help, Mat, haven't they?" began Miss Porter again, after a brief silence.

"I don't know where I should have been without them and their author."

"Their author? I can't believe it is Mr. Buckingham, after all, though I suppose he is quite clever enough. They seem more than clever."

"So is he."

"Well, perhaps. At any rate, I don't believe he wrote them. And you say that to-morrow night, at the Jefferson Club banquet, the author will reveal himself and speak? I should really like to go."

"You, Clara? Well, what is to prevent? You know Miss Buckingham urged you to visit her again. Why don't you?"

"But I must be here Tuesday, with you, to get the first word — every word."

"Exactly. But you can come back Tuesday morning. I'll telephone to Miss Buckingham now."

When he returned, the conversation before the smouldering fire became a little more personal — a brief word here and there, with intimate silences. Long since, Miss Porter had partly guessed, partly heard her brother's secret, but she did not like to urge him to talk freely.

"You have no more definite hope — in regard to — Miss Buckingham?" she asked at length.

He shook his head. "None — definite. I believe she cares for me. Yet I don't know. It may be that I am no more to her than a symbol, a mere personification of the abstract cause that has awakened all the deepest vitality of her nature. I don't know. And even if she cares for me, how can I expect her to give up her immense independence, the large, free motion of her own will to which she has always been accustomed, and come to meet another will, even half-way. It means a great deal to me, Clara. Oh! so much. Do you think me ungrateful or neglectful of all you are to me?"

"No, no," she said, "it is so different. It must be different. She shall be as dear to me as you are."

Silence again, except for the clock, the fire, and the low moan of the November wind.

The banquet of the Jefferson Club was a very brilliant affair. A hundred and twenty guests assembled, among whom were some distinguished Democrats from other states and a large number of ladies, including Viola and several of her Boston friends, as well as Miss Porter.

The dinner, though excellent, was rapidly disposed of; for everybody knew what was to come and, moreover, Porter, who was present, was obliged to leave for Faneuil Hall at eight

o'clock and was expected to say a few words before his departure.

Therefore the company was called to order at a little after half-past seven, the candidate made his brief speech amid huge applause, took his leave, and was succeeded by Burke, who also spoke very briefly, explaining that he knew his audience was looking for a much more brilliant entertainment than he could afford them.

Then the president introduced Mr. George Buckingham.

The audience looked at one another. It was he, then, really he. The Republicans were right. And he had written advertisements. There was no denying it. Well, what if he had? He was a clever fellow. And his letters — what would you or I have given to be able to write them? Let us applaud him, with all our hearts.

They did, and Flitters, standing trim and simple, with a carnation in the buttonhole of his evening coat, blinked his pale eyes and looked as solemn as an owl and as humorously out of place.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, when the uproar was stilled. "I want to talk to you about the 'Democrat' letters. I suppose a few of you may have read them, although you look to me like too intelligent a company to waste much time on reading of that nature. You've heard of them, however. And I hardly need tell you what remarkable productions they are.

Viewed as pieces of pure literature even, I consider that they yield nothing to the letters of Junius, which, by the way, have always seemed to me a rather inferior sort of affair. But these letters are not to be viewed as literature, they are to be viewed solely as red hot shot in this campaign; and from that standpoint I think it would be hard to find their equal. There is no rhetoric in them, no literary gorgeousness, just straight argument, flying like an ungloved fist, blow after blow, into the podgy Republican stomach, which has so long been fattening on the good things of the people. I reel with laughter, ladies and gentlemen, positively reel, when I think of Messrs. Wood and Heath so simply concocting the beautiful scheme which was shown up in Saturday's 'Democrat' and getting nothing out of it but a hornet's nest. Yes, there have been several interesting features in this campaign, among others a certain Porter — as he has gone, there is no use in trying to see if I could make him blush; but the most interesting, original, and effective feature, in my opinion, has been the 'Democrat' letters."

Here the speaker paused, took a drink of water, and enjoyed the confusion, the bewilderment, which had been coming to a climax in the faces of his audience.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," he resumed, "I take pleasure in presenting to you

the author of the 'Democrat' letters, who is sitting at my right hand — Miss Viola Buckingham."

It took this statement a second to penetrate, several seconds to get credited. Then, as Viola rose from her seat, and stood waiting, a little paler than usual, a universal shout broke forth, which made the chandeliers rattle and the passers-by in the street pause in wonder. Again and again the noise died away. Again and again it was renewed, as people realized afresh the astonishing revelation that had been made to them. Not one person in that room, probably not one person in Massachusetts, besides Porter, Wingate, and Flitters, had thought of looking for "Democrat" in such a quarter as this.

Meantime Viola was standing, smiling, though with tears in her eyes. But at length the president compelled silence so that she might be heard.

"My friends," she said, "this is a very great occasion for me. It is hardly necessary for me to disclaim the absurd eulogy which it has pleased my neighbour to deliver on the hypothesis that he was the author of the documents in question. The letters have done their part. So have all of you, each in his own way, and I hope that to-morrow most of you will do it, as 'Democrat' cannot, at the polls. But if we win, and we shall win, it will be owing neither to your efforts nor to 'Democrat's.' It will be owing to the character of the candidate for

whom we are fighting and to the cause he represents. What that cause is I need not tell you in detail. It is enough to use the words of Lincoln and say that Mr. Porter is labouring with all his heart and soul that 'Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, may not perish from the earth.' If I have been able to render even the least service towards that end, it will be the proudest and the happiest action of my life."

The applause broke out again more wildly than before. The whole company gathered about Viola to congratulate her and press her hand. Even yet they did not realize the fact, could not take it in. "Did you write them?" "Were you really the author of all those letters?" "How could you write them?" "And keep it to yourself all this time, too?"

"A good card for Porter," observed Flitters to Flora, as they stood quietly outside the throng. "I believe you promised to become Mrs. Buckingham if he is elected. It looks now as if you might have that misfortune."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TUESDAY morning Porter went to Foxbridge to vote and then wait quietly at home for the result.

The morning papers were, of course, full of the "Democrat" revelation. "It's worth five thousand votes to us, at least," said Burke to Hinckley. "Ten, I put it," said Hinckley to Burke. "These sentimental considerations take the women and the women will get after the men."

"Democrat" also issued a last appeal, brief and general, but even more vigorous and stirring than usual. If it had been dull as Lethe, however, it would have stirred people on that morning, after the incident of the evening before.

Yet with all this, the wise ones shook their heads. The great excitement of the campaign had tended to sharpen party lines and, as every one knows, the Republicans are strong in Massachusetts. Porter had made a bustle on the surface, admitted the wise ones; but there is a large conservative element, which votes but does not talk, nor care for the talk of others. Then there was the money. Money was said to have

been used on the Republican side to an extent almost unheard of in this old-fashioned state. Wood could command unlimited sums and he was desperate. A defeat at such a crisis would shake his prestige so that it was doubtful whether he could ever recover it, and the senatorship, which had been the ambition of his life, seemed slipping away from him.

Therefore it was by no means with perfect confidence that Porter sat down in his study in the evening to await the final result. He had asked to be alone, had asked even Clara to leave him. Flitters, Smith, Burke were all outside, taking turns at the telephone, rushing to the study door to give the figures from one place or another, announcing them from the piazza to the throng which had gathered about the house, cheered madly at every Democratic gain, and called for Porter until several times he was obliged to go to a window and speak to them, when the cheering was madder than ever. But in the study it was quiet. The fire burned brightly on the hearth. The cat was asleep on the window-seat, indifferent to elections and human vanity.

Porter read a little, wrote a little, in spite of the incessant interruptions. But his mind was elsewhere, not unnaturally. This was the crisis of his life, the day towards which the hopes of years had tended. If he were beaten, of course he should not give up. But what courage it

would take to begin the whole edifice again from the foundation! Should he be beaten?

"Brockton for Porter!" "Fall River for Porter!" "Worcester probably for Heath." Well, that was to be expected. "Lowell for Porter!" "Porter leads. Not much doubt!" telephones Hinckley. A great cheering this time and another speech.

And Viola. Come what, come may, he would see Viola to-morrow. She must answer him then. Could it be that failure there would be added to failure elsewhere? Well, if it were so, he would face it like a man.

Enter Flitters. "A note by special messenger, marked 'personal.' May be a bill, may be a love-letter. Will wait till to-morrow in either case, I should think." Exit Flitters.

Porter took the letter with indifference, instantly recognized Viola's writing, and tore it open. "Dear Friend," it ran. "I could not let this hour pass without your hearing from me. If we win, as we must and shall, I want every drop of happiness to be crowded into your cup. If by some extraordinary perversity of chance, we should lose, I want you to know that I am nearer to you than any other human being to give you courage for a new battle and a final triumph. When you came to me first, I fell in love with the cause. Now I love the man with my whole heart and soul. The man is worthy of the cause. If only I were worthy of either! Yours, when you choose to come for me. V. B."

Porter sat rapt, reading this letter over and over and over, hardly able to take in what it meant to him. From time to time an announcement was made and the crowd cheered, but he did not hear it.

Then, all at once, after a moment's lull, there was a rush, as it seemed, of every one in the house. Flitters burst into the study with the whole company behind him. "Porter elected without a question. Hinckley congratulates," he cried. "Porter! Porter! Porter!"

The cry was taken up by all present, ran through the corridors, and swelled outside into a long roar, renewed over and over again. "Porter! Porter! Porter! Hurrah for Porter! We want Porter."

Porter rose from his chair, still holding the letter, almost like a man awakened from a dream. Folding his hands, with the letter in them, he bowed his head, and every sound in the room was hushed, while against the background of tumultuous ecstasy without there came the grave murmur of his solemn words: "God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

THE END.

B. P. L. Binder
Dec 2 1910

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Hester of the Hills. By GROVER CLAY.

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"Hester of the Hills" has a motif unusual in life, and new in fiction. Its hero, who has only acquired his own strength and resourcefulness by a lifelong struggle against constitutional frailty, has come to make the question of bodily soundness his dominant thought. He resolves to ensure strong constitutions to his children by marrying a physically perfect woman. After long search, he finds this ideal in Hester, the daughter of a "cracker squatter," of the Ozark Mountains of Missouri. But, — he forgot to take into consideration that very vital emotion, love, which played havoc with his well-laid plans.

It is an ingenious combination of practical realism and imaginative fiction worked out to a thoroughly delightful and satisfying climax.

Prisoners of Fortune. A Tale of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. By Ruel Perley Smith, author of "The Rival Campers," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill $1.50

The period of Mr. Smith's story is the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the shores of the American colonies were harassed and the seas patrolled by pirates and buccaneers. These robbed and spoiled, and often seized and put to death, the sailors and fishers and other humbler folk, while their leaders claimed friendship alike with Southern planters and New England merchants, — with whom it is said they frequently divided their spoils.

The times were stern and the colonists were hardy, but they loved as truly and tenderly as in more peaceful days. Thus, while the hero's adventures with pirates and his search for their hidden treasure is a record of desperate encounters and daring deeds, his love-story and his winning of sweet Mary Vane is in delightful contrast.

The Rome Express. By Major Arthur Griffiths, author of "The Passenger from Calais," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by A. O. Scott $1.25

A mysterious murder on a flying express train, a wily Italian, a charming woman caught in the meshes of circumstantial evidence, a chivalrous Englishman, and a police force with a keen nose for the wrong clue, are the ingredients from which Major Griffiths has concocted a clever, up-to-date detective story. The book is bright and spirited, with rapid action, and consistent development which brings the story to a logical and dramatic ending.

The Morning Glory Club. By George A. Kyle.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by A. O. Scott $1.25

The doings of the Morning Glory Club will furnish genuine amusement to the reader. Originally formed to "elevate" the village, it quickly develops into an exchange for town gossip. It has a saving grace, however, in the person of motherly Mrs. Stout, the uncultured but sweet-natured and pure-minded village philosopher, who pours the oil of her saneness and charity on the troubled waters of discussion and condemnation.

It is a series of clear and interesting pictures of the humor of village life.

The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt, Detective. New Illustrated Edition. By Arthur Morrison, author of "The Green Diamond," "The Red Triangle," etc.

Cloth decorative, with six full-page drawings by W. Kirkpatrick $1.50

The success of Mr. Morrison's recent books, "The Green Diamond" and "The Red Triangle," has led to an imperative demand for the reissue of "The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt," which has been out of print for a number of years.

It will be remembered that Martin Hewitt is the detective in "The Red Triangle," of whom the *New York Tribune* said: "Better than Sherlock Holmes." His adventures in the London slums were of such a nature that the *Philadelphia North American* said: "The reader who has a grain of fancy or imagination may be defied to lay this book down once he has begun it until the last word is reached."

Mystery Island. By Edward H. Hurst.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece . $1.50

A hunting camp on a swampy island in the Florida Everglades furnishes the background for this present-day tale.

By the murder of one of their number, the secret of egress from the island is lost, and the campers find themselves marooned.

Cut off from civilization, conventional veneer soon wears away. Love, hate, and revenge spring up, and after the sterner passions have had their sway the man and the woman are left alone to fulfil their own destiny.

While there is much that is unusual in the plot and its development, Mr. Hurst has handled his subject with fine delicacy, and the tale of their love on the beautiful little island is told with deep sympathy and feeling.

The Flying Cloud. By Morley Roberts, author of "The Promotion of the Admiral," "Rachel Marr," "The Idlers," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece . $1.50

Mr. Roberts's new book is much more than a ripping good sea story such as might be expected from the author of "The Promotion of the Admiral." In "The Flying Cloud" the waters and the winds are gods personified. Their every mood and phase are described in words of telling force. There is no world but the waste of waters.

Mr. Roberts glories and exults in the mystery, the passion, the strength of the elements, as did the Viking chroniclers of old. He understands them and loves them and interprets them as no other writer has heretofore done. The book is too big for conventional phrases. It needs Mr. Roberts's own richness of imagery and masterly expression to describe adequately the word-pictures in this epic of wind and waves.